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HISTORY of WAR™

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

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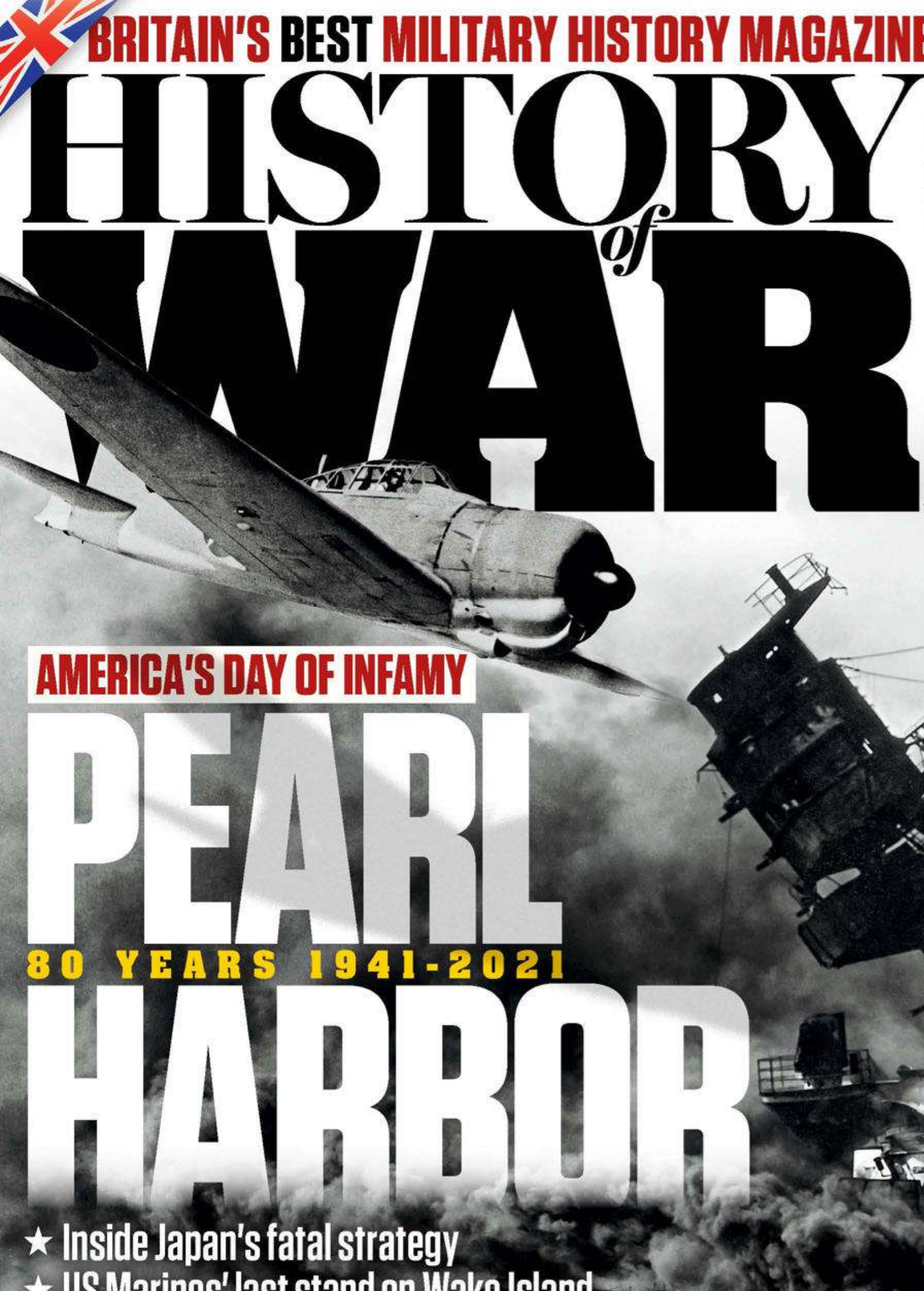
Unsung heroes of the 'Bridge Too Far'



ABLE ARCHER '83

How the Cold War nearly went nuclear

AMERICA'S DAY OF INFAMY

PEARL HARBOR

80 YEARS 1941-2021

★ Inside Japan's fatal strategy
★ US Marines' last stand on Wake Island
★ Historian Mark Stille on America's devastating turning point

ENGLAND'S VIKING KING

How Cnut forged an empire from decades of conquest

FUTURE
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BATTLE OF MALAKOFF

France's triumph at the Siege of Sevastopol, 1855

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Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas!

Here you can see a small fraction of what K&C has produced for this *Festive Season...*

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At the top of this page is a figure of the late ***HRH Prince Philip,*** Colonel of the Grenadier Guards.

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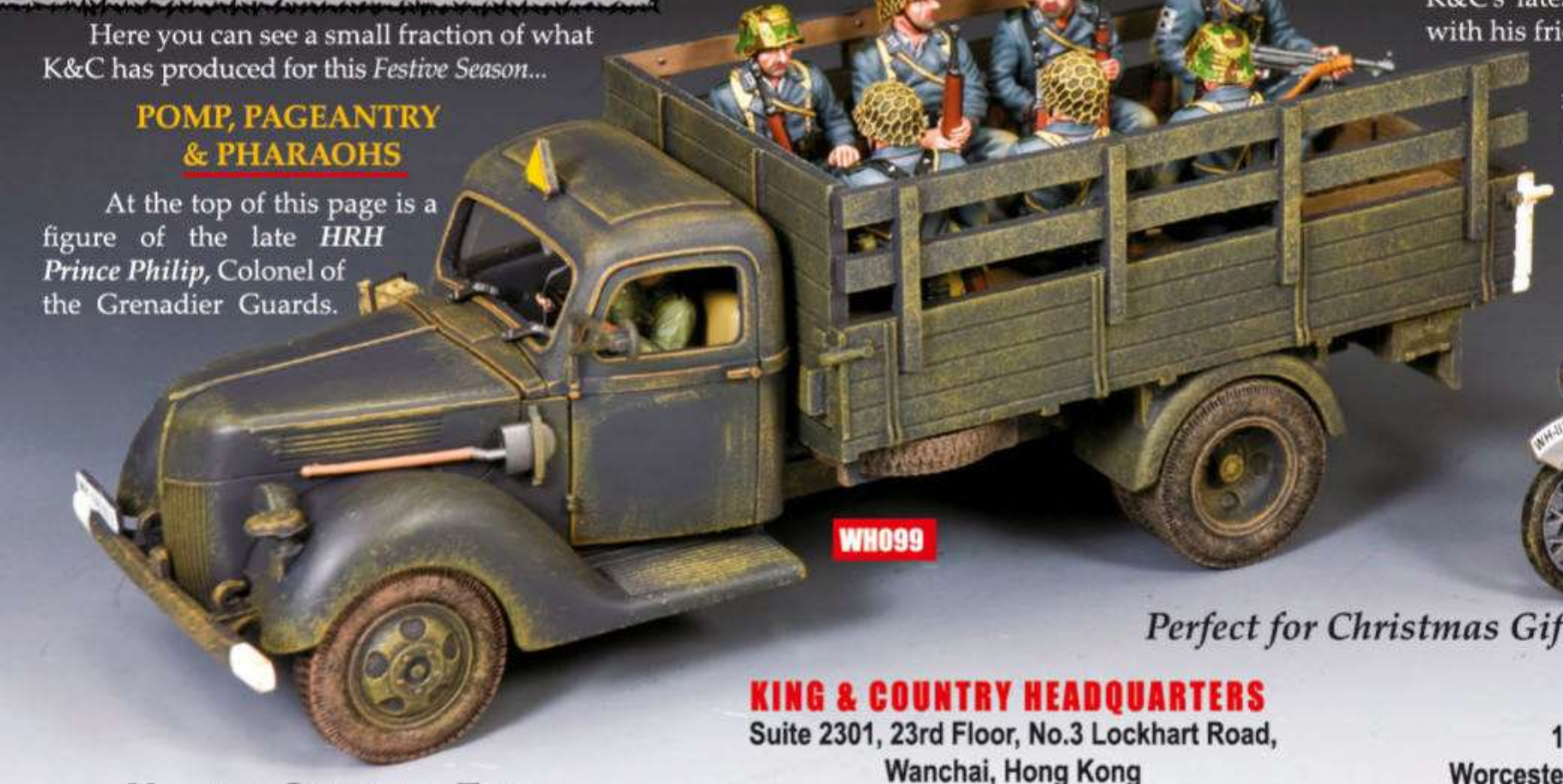
This WW2 ***'Fordwerke V3000'*** truck can easily accommodate seated soldiers or a load of cargo. Alongside is a German Army ***Dispatch Rider.***



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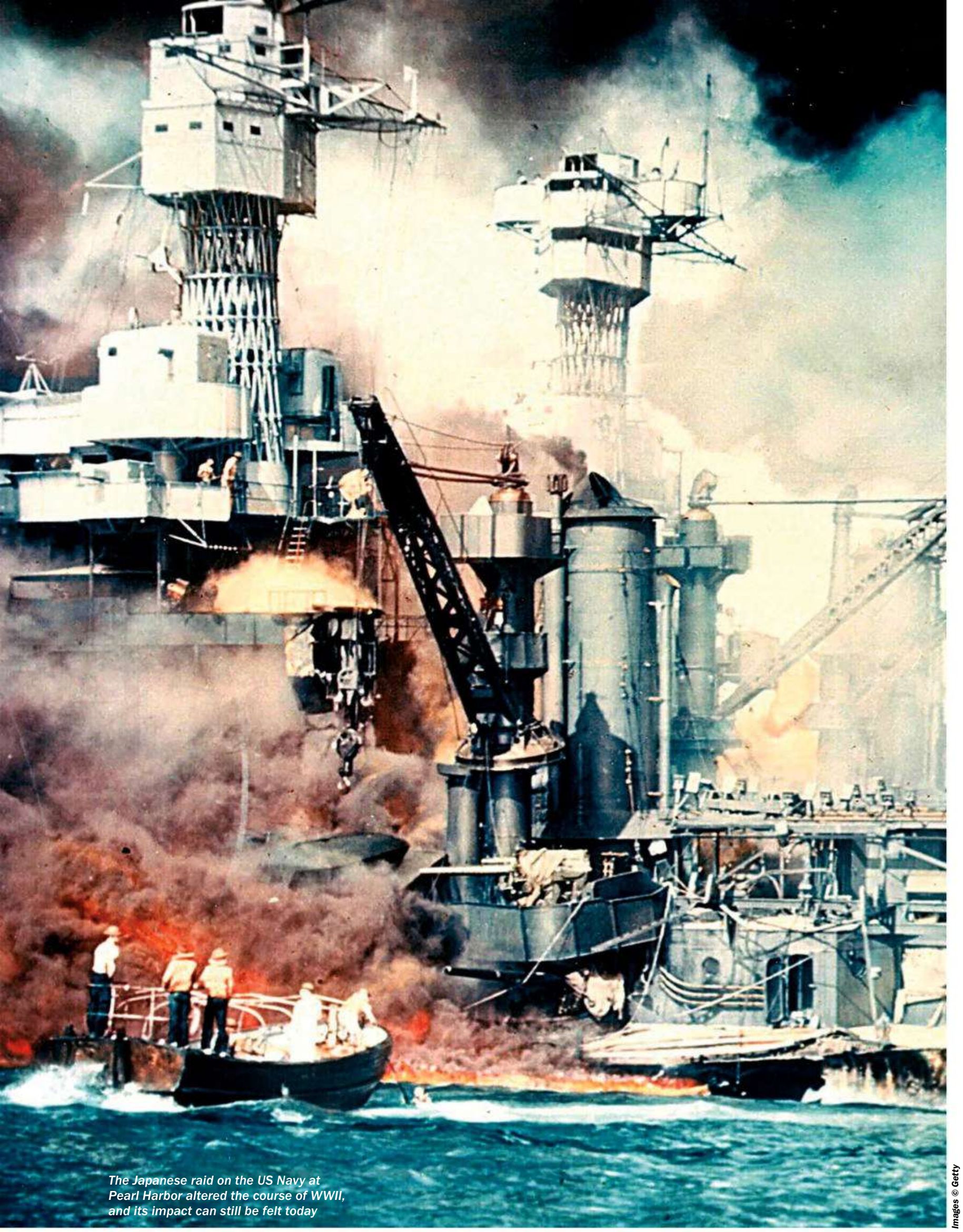

The Japanese raid on the US Navy at Pearl Harbor altered the course of WWII, and its impact can still be felt today

Images © Getty

HISTORY HUBRIS

HERE ARE FIVE 100% HISTORICALLY ACCURATE* EXCHANGES THAT WERE TRAGICALLY MISTAKEN

1 LORD CARDIGAN'S ORDER AT BALAKLAVA

"Which guns? Those over there? Are you sure!?"
"Yes, definitely... probably... I think."

2 FRENCH CHARGE AT AGINCOURT

"But my lord, it looks awfully muddy over there, shouldn't we—"
"CCCCCHHHHARGE!"

3 ROME'S LOST LEGION IN TEUTOBURG FOREST

"General Varus, I'm scared, I think the trees have eyes."
"That's it, I'm confiscating your wine flask – you're hallucinating."

4 ANGLO-SAXONS AT HASTINGS

"Guys, it may be a trap – best to stay where we are."
"Woo! Let's go! Last one down the hill is a dirty Viking."

5 THE TYPO TO END ALL TYPOS

"Cover looks great – happy 100th issue History of War team!"
"Fantastic, and all without a hitch!"

**No, not really...*

Dear readers,

In History of War's last issue you may have spotted a typo on the cover. We are very sorry this happened and hope that it did not spoil your enjoyment of the magazine.

We have recently introduced new systems as part of the production process, which resulted in a major glitch and caused the unfortunate error to appear. We've reviewed our processes to ensure this error will not be repeated.

Many thanks for your support,

The History of War team

The attack on the World Trade Center in 2001 was an unquestionably monumental turning point in the history of the USA – an attack on American soil that will no doubt continue to influence events long into the future. Similarly, 80 years ago this month another shocking and fateful attack, referred to quite aptly as a 'day of infamy', took place with the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. This assault not only changed the future of the USA, but also the world, as the nation changed from isolation to becoming a global superpower.

Tim Williamson
Editor-in-Chief

FOR MORE FROM THE HISTORY OF WAR TEAM VISIT WWW.MAGAZINESDIRECT.COM

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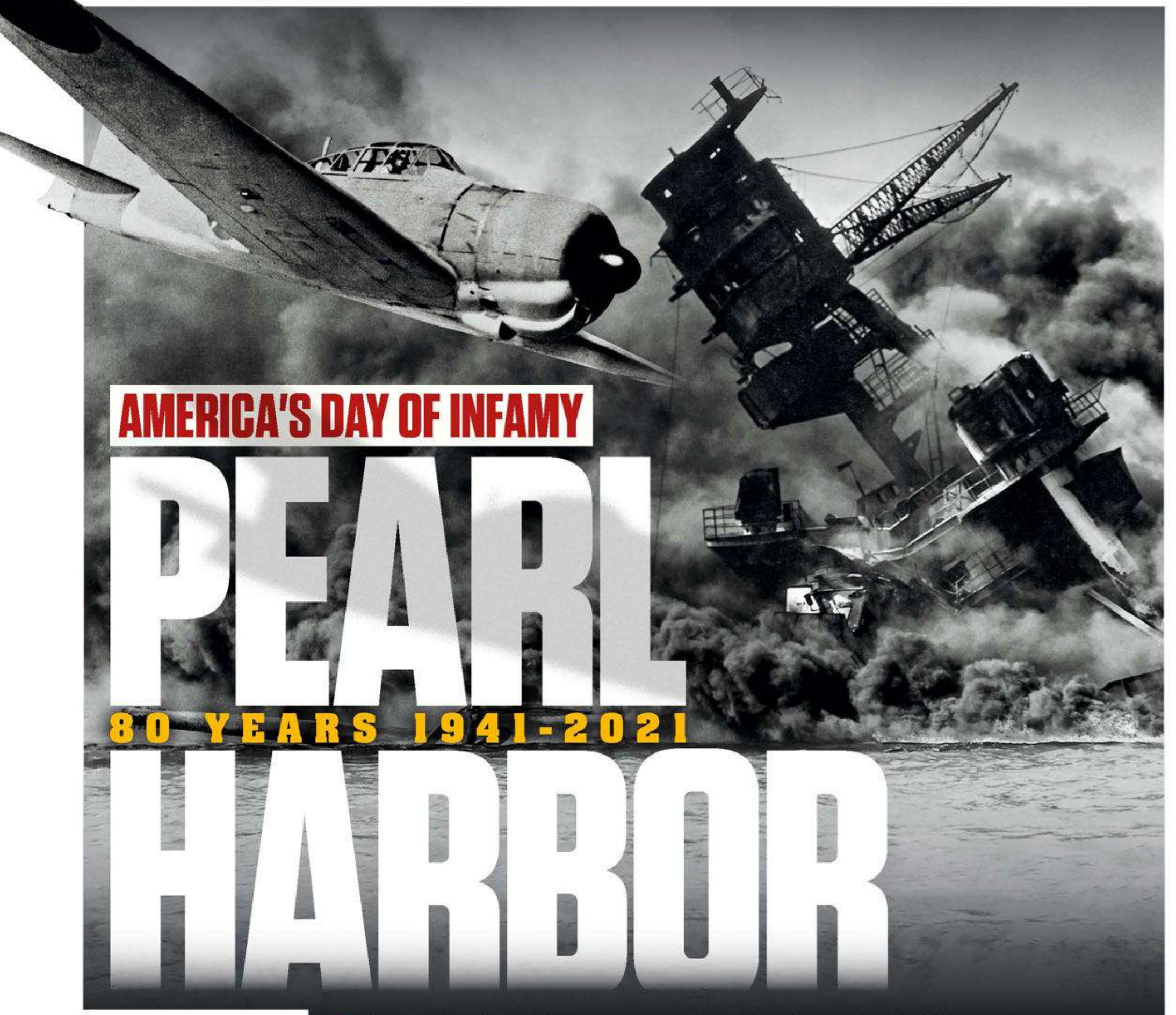

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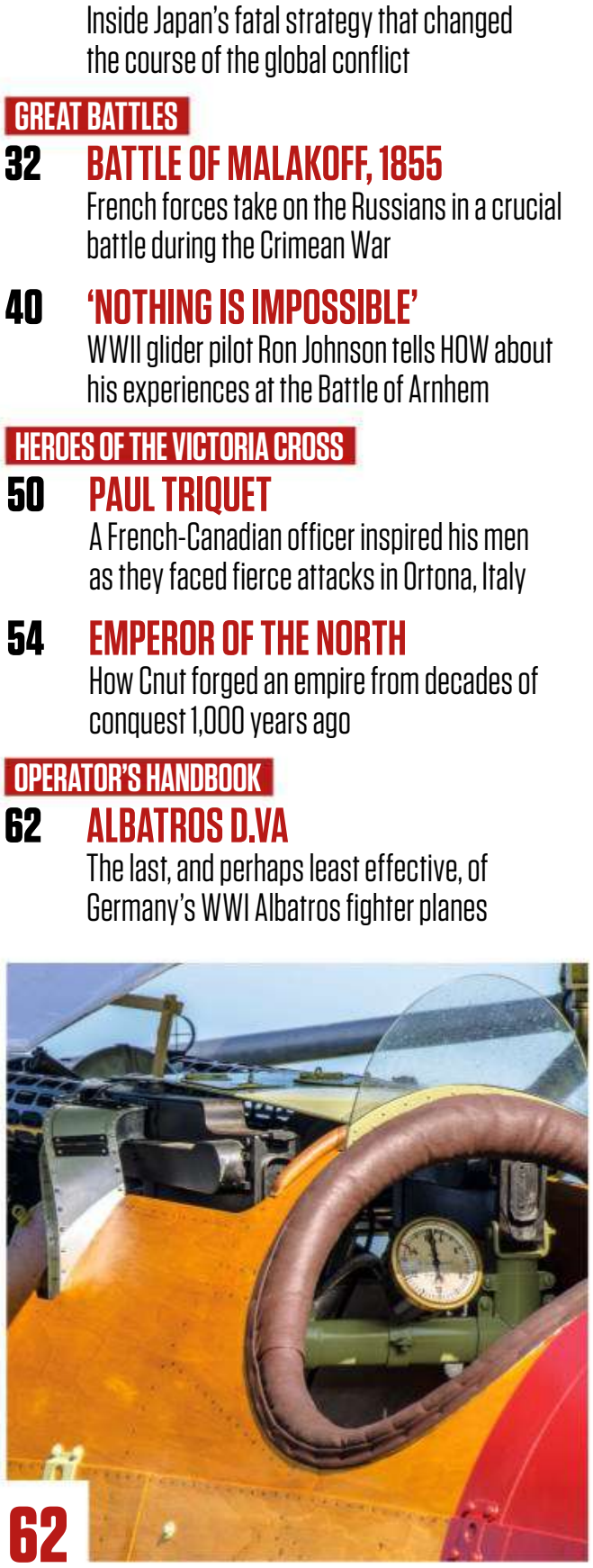

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ARTEFACT OF WAR

82 **DUTCH VICTORY GOBLET**

© Getty

WAR in FOCUS

AIRBORNE INSPECTION

19 May, 1944

The Queen and Princess Elizabeth talk to paratroopers in front of a Halifax aircraft during a tour of Airborne forces. King George IV also was present, inspecting the men who were kitted out in their full gear and parachutes. Just weeks later Operation Overlord began with over 18,000 men of the 82nd and 101st US Airborne Divisions and the British 6th Airborne Division dropping into France behind enemy lines. By the end of the first day on 6 June, some 23,000 Airborne forces had landed in France.

WAR in FOCUS

JUNGLE FEVER

29 November, 1967

American soldiers pick their way through the ravaged jungle of Hill 875, near Dak To. The hill saw five days of intense combat during the wider Battle of Dak To, after elements of the 173rd Airborne Brigade were ambushed by People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) troops on 19 November. American and South Vietnamese troops fought against the PAVN in the Central Highlands for over a month, eventually drawing in thousands of reinforcements and air support. 376 Americans were killed during the battle, with thousands of North Vietnamese estimated to have been killed or wounded.

© Getty

WAR in FOCUS

BOMBER TEAM

October 1942

A riveting team works on the cockpit shell of a B-25 bomber at the North American Aviation factory, Inglewood, California. The North American B-25 Mitchell was a versatile twin-engine bomber capable of low- and high-altitude missions. It was named after William 'Billy' Mitchell, who is considered to be the founder of the US Air Force and was an early proponent of air superiority and bomber aircraft as the future of warfare.

© Getty

Ivy Mike, the first hydrogen bomb, destroyed the island of Elugelab when it was detonated

TIMELINE OF THE...

COLD WAR

This almost 50-year standoff between the USSR and the USA brought the world to the brink of annihilation

1945

BOMBING OF HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI

On 6 and 9 August, 1945, the US detonates the first two atomic bombs, over the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing over 200,000 people.

The mushroom cloud caused by the atomic bomb over Nagasaki

© Getty

1949

© Alamy

FIRST LIGHTNING 01

The Soviet Union successfully tests its first atomic bomb, roughly equal in size to the Trinity, the USA's first bomb. In September President Truman makes this news public. Once the Soviet Union is confirmed to be in possession of the atomic bomb, pressure mounts to develop the first hydrogen bomb.

The detonation of First Lightning at Semipalatinsk on 29 August 1949

1949

COMMUNIST REVOLUTION IN CHINA

Mao Zedong, leader of the Chinese Communist Party, declares the creation of the People's Republic of China following three years of bloody civil war. As a result the US severs diplomatic ties with China for several decades.

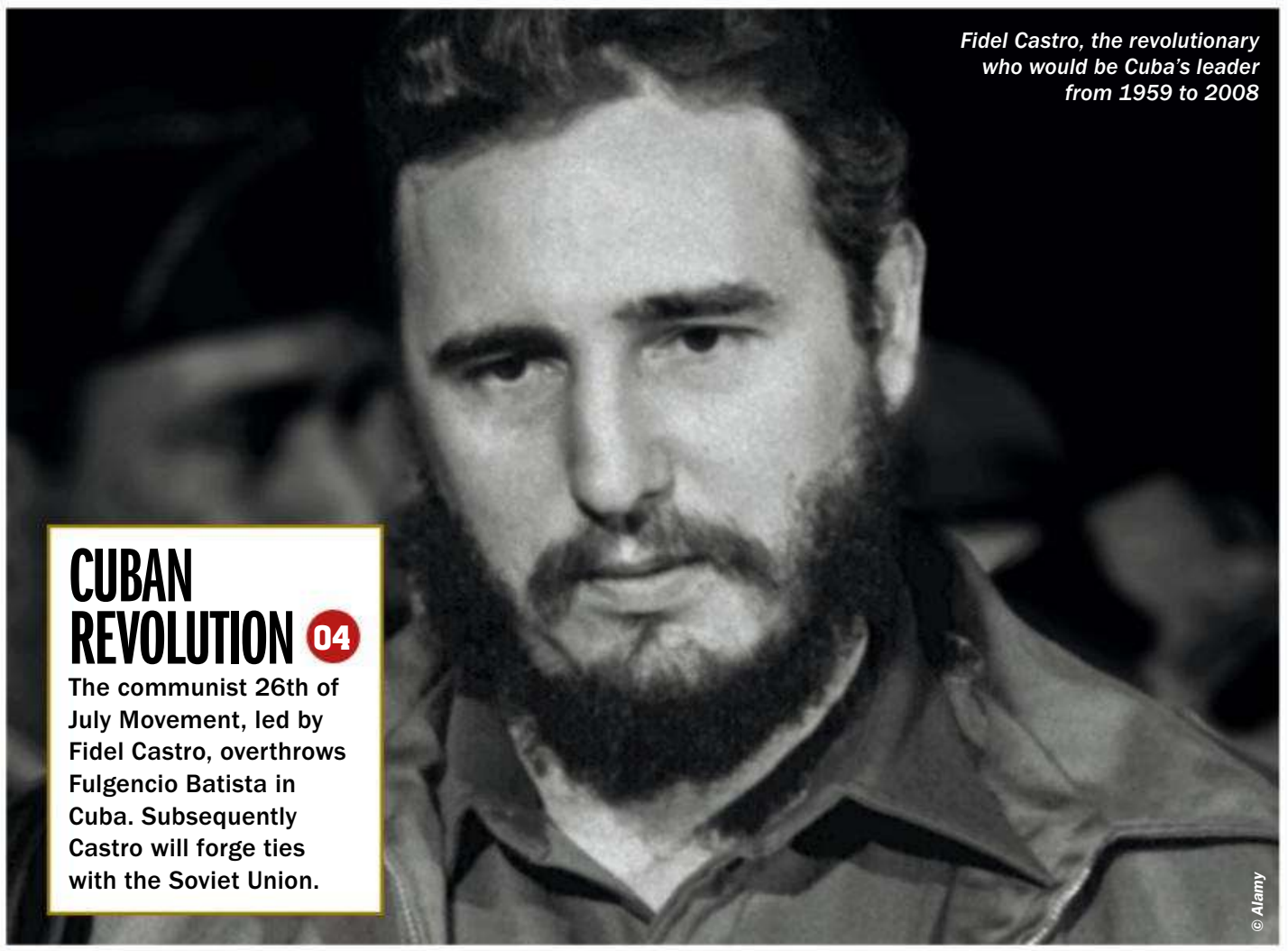
Mao Zedong announcing the creation of the People's Republic of China in 1949

© Getty

© Getty

FIRST HYDROGEN BOMB DETONATED 03

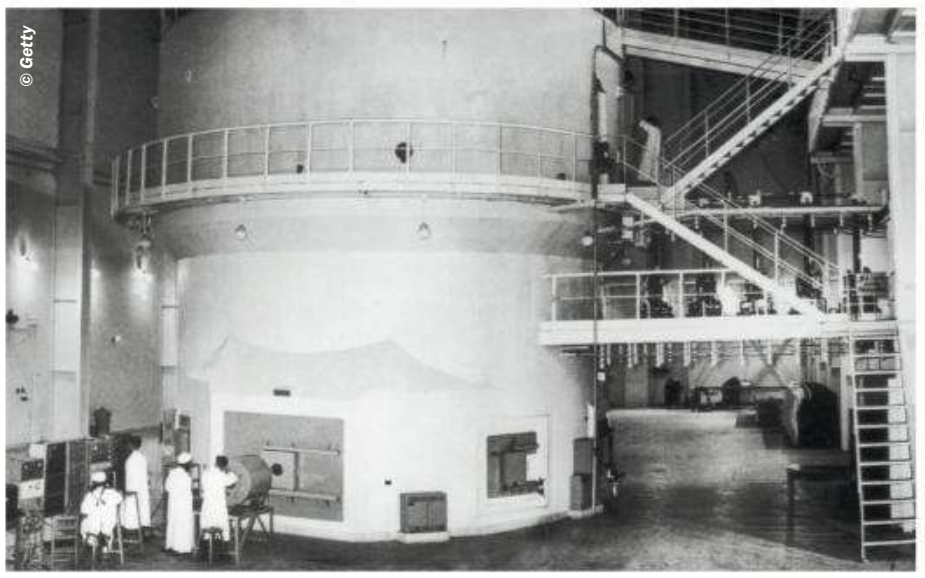
One-thousand times more powerful than the USA's previous atomic bombs and with the explosive equivalent of ten megatons of TNT, the hydrogen bomb is a terrifying step forward in the arms race.


Fidel Castro, the revolutionary who would be Cuba's leader from 1959 to 2008

© Alamy

CUBAN REVOLUTION 04

The communist 26th of July Movement, led by Fidel Castro, overthrows Fulgencio Batista in Cuba. Subsequently Castro will forge ties with the Soviet Union.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CHINA DEVELOPS THE ATOMIC BOMB 05

Following the USA, USSR, Britain and France, Communist China becomes the fifth country to have nuclear capability when it successfully tests its first atomic device.

One of the reactors used in the creation of China's first atomic weapon

1950 — 1952 — 1959 — 1961 — 1964

KOREAN WAR 02

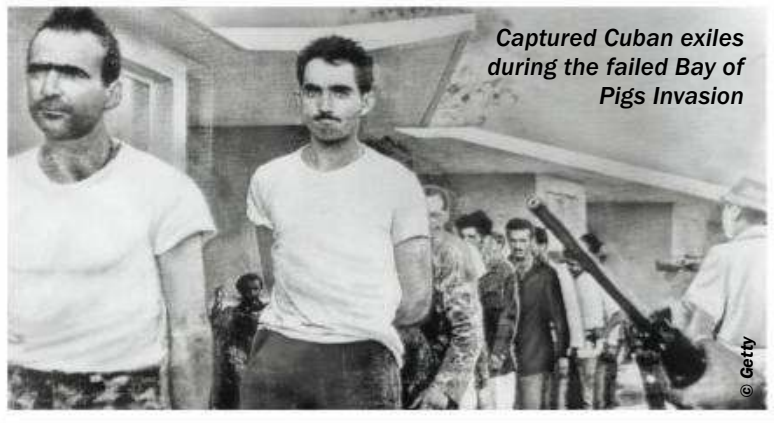
Tensions on the Korean peninsula erupt when the Communist North attempts to invade the South. American and UN troops are sent to assist and are later joined by forces from other countries, including Britain.

The US 1st Cavalry Division with a number of South Korean guerillas

© Alamy

BAY OF PIGS INVASION

14,000 exiles from Fidel Castro's Cuba attempt an invasion, having been backed and trained by the CIA. The operation is a disaster, with over 1,200 captured and 100 killed. President Kennedy spends 20 months negotiating for their release.


Captured Cuban exiles during the failed Bay of Pigs Invasion

© Getty

SOVIET INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN 08
CUBAN REVOLUTION 04
CONTRA REBELS 09
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"14,000 EXILES FROM FIDEL CASTRO'S CUBA ATTEMPT AN INVASION, HAVING BEEN BACKED AND TRAINED BY THE CIA. THE OPERATION IS A DISASTER"

1962

CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

A tense stalemate occurs between the USA and the USSR regarding the placement of nuclear missiles on the island of Cuba. After 13 days a peaceful solution is reached.

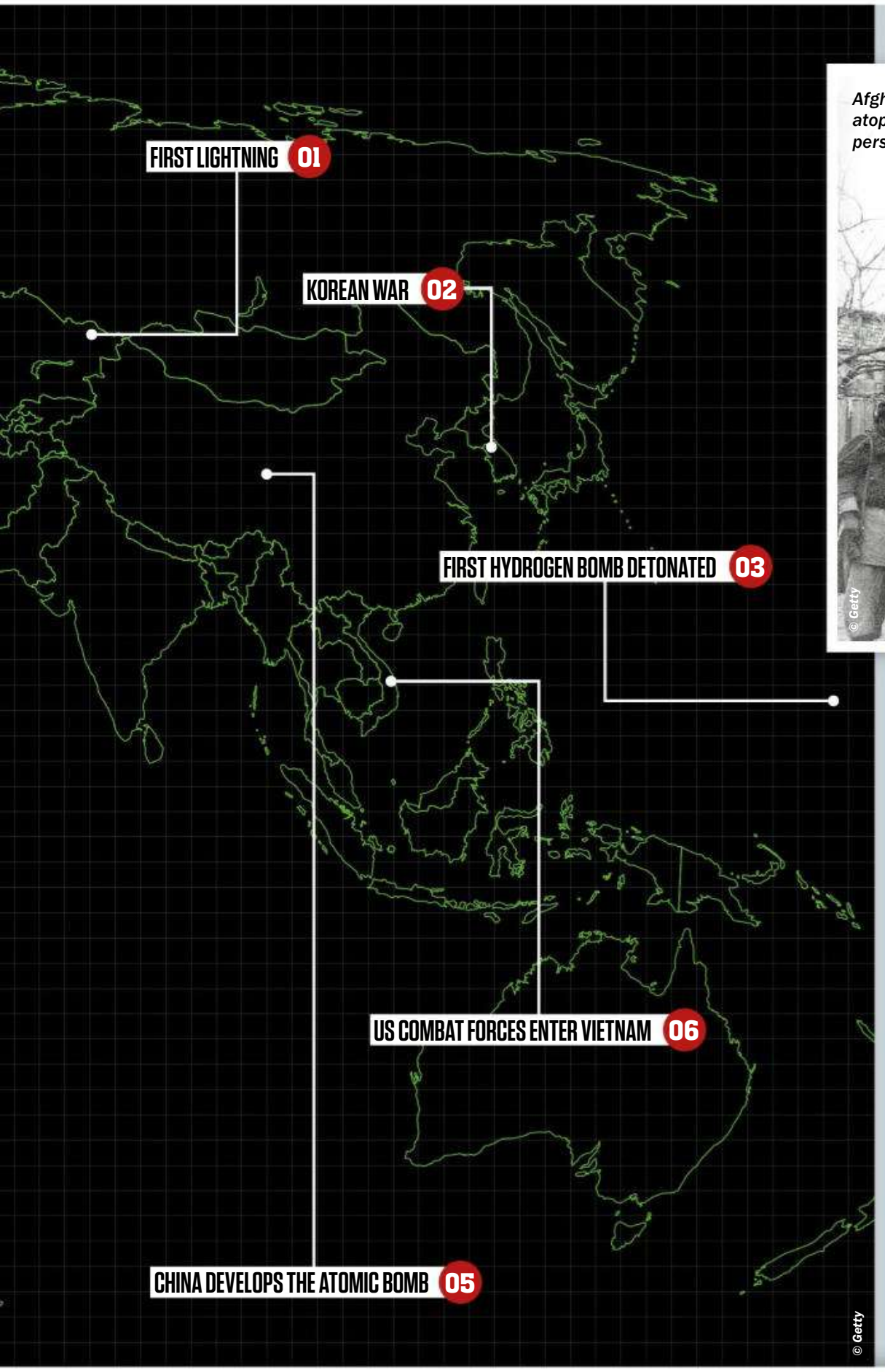
US strategic air command personal examine reconnaissance photographs of the missile bases in Cuba

1964

US COMBAT FORCES ENTER VIETNAM 06

President Johnson makes the controversial decision to send troops to assist South Vietnam in its conflict with the Communist North, led by Ho Chi Minh.

US Special Forces teams being taken into Cambodia during the Vietnam War


FIRST LIGHTNING 01
KOREAN WAR 02
FIRST HYDROGEN BOMB DETONATED 03
US COMBAT FORCES ENTER VIETNAM 06
CHINA DEVELOPS THE ATOMIC BOMB 05
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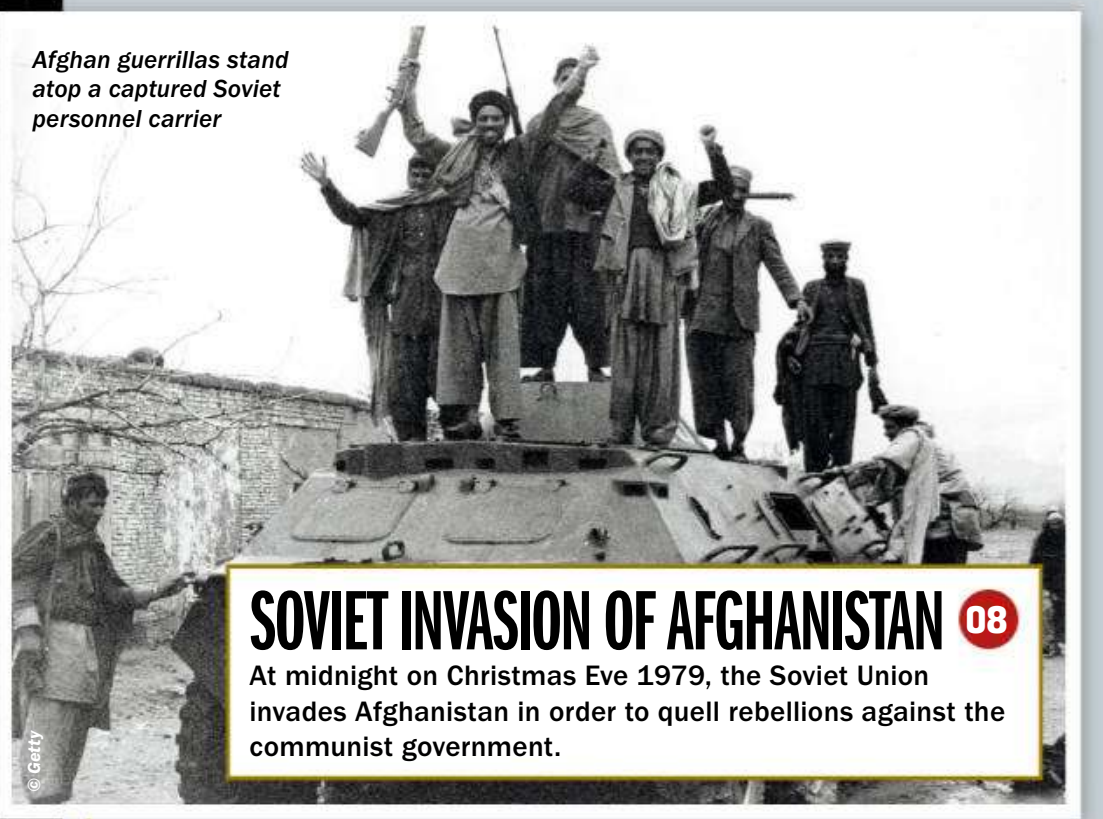


Afghan guerrillas stand atop a captured Soviet personnel carrier

SOVIET INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN 08

At midnight on Christmas Eve 1979, the Soviet Union invades Afghanistan in order to quell rebellions against the communist government.

CONTRA REBELS 09

President Reagan authorises funds be used to train and arm Nicaraguan counter-revolutionaries against the leftist Sandinista regime known as the Contras. In 1984 legislation bans this aid, leading to the Iran Contra affair.

A group of the US backed Contra rebels on patrol in Nicaragua

1973 — 1979 — 1981 — 1983

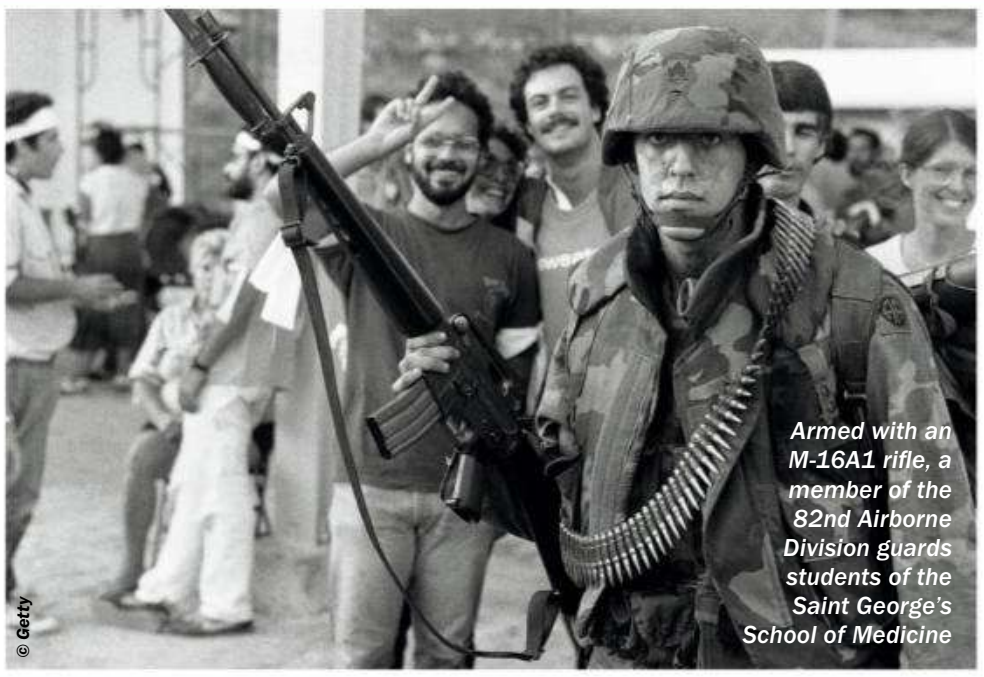
CHILEAN COUP D'ETAT 07

The Chilean military launches a coup against leftist president Salvador Allende. US involvement in the coup has long been debated.

Chilean soldiers surround the Presidential Palace during the 1973 coup

OPERATION URGENT FURY 10

After a military coup on the island of Grenada, Reagan orders a US invasion to rescue American citizens trapped there. The four-day assault sees US troops briefly face off against Grenadan and Cuban soldiers.



Armed with an M-16A1 rifle, a member of the 82nd Airborne Division guards students of the Saint George's School of Medicine

WARSAW PACT

This alliance of central and Eastern Bloc nations fuelled global tensions, but grew to become a far greater threat to its own members than NATO

There is a popular perception that the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, better known as NATO, was established to defend western Europe from the Communist Warsaw Pact. In reality NATO was formed first in 1949 in response to the creation of the Iron Curtain and the Berlin Blockade. Six years later the Soviet Union created the Warsaw Pact after West Germany joined NATO. Moscow had also decided that the series of bilateral military pacts, which it had employed since the end of the Second World War to bind Eastern Europe to the Soviet Union, were no longer sufficient. Notably the Allied powers had withdrawn from Austria in 1955, which meant the Soviets needed a military reason to continue stationing troops in Hungary and Romania. Previously they had been able to argue that these deployments kept open Soviet lines of communication to their occupation forces in Austria.

On 14 May 1955, leaders from Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania and the Soviet Union met in Warsaw and signed a Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Support. The creation of this Warsaw Pact occurred just one day before the conclusion of the Austrian State Treaty, which declared the country neutral territory. Moscow had hoped that West Germany would adopt a similar stance. However, Austria along with neutral Switzerland now split NATO in half, cutting its lines of communication with Italy. Likewise, neutral Yugoslavia cut off Greece and Turkey from the

Representatives of the member states of the Warsaw Pact photographed prior to the signing of the alliance. From left to right: Romanian Premier Georgiu Dej, First Secretary of Polish Central Committee Bierut, Marshal Nikolay Bulganin (hat in hand), Marshal Ivan Konev (uniform, saluting), Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov, and Defence Minister Marshal Georgi Zhukov (uniform, saluting)

rest of NATO. Furthermore, NATO was alarmed that observer nations at the Warsaw meeting included China, Mongolia, North Vietnam and North Korea, which were all communist countries with anti-Western agendas.

Although the Warsaw Pact was supposed to be a defensive alliance of equals there was no hiding its complete domination by Moscow. The Pact's commander-in-chief was a Soviet Marshal, while the military structure was headed by a Soviet deputy defence minister who was in charge of the Joint High Command. The latter's headquarters were conveniently located in Moscow and it had responsibility for training, tactics and weaponry. This meant that the non-Soviet Warsaw Pact members had to adhere to Soviet doctrine and employ Soviet arms.

The air defence of Eastern Europe was to be controlled by Moscow even in peace time. In the event of war all East European forces would come under Soviet commanders. This left Western and Eastern Europe in a permanent armed stand-off along the Iron Curtain, with both sides fearing attack by the other. This situation fuelled the paranoia of the Cold War even more. Ironically, the Warsaw Pact was to prove a greater menace to its members than NATO.

"ALTHOUGH THE WARSAW PACT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A DEFENSIVE ALLIANCE OF EQUALS THERE WAS NO HIDING ITS COMPLETE DOMINATION BY MOSCOW"

Article 1 of the Pact stated: "The signatories declare that in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations they will refrain from the threat or the use of force in their international relations and, in the case of international disputes, will settle them by peaceful means." This was almost immediately violated. On 31 October 1956 the Hungarian government announced their intention to leave the Warsaw Pact and demanded the withdrawal of all Soviet troops. Hungary wanted to become neutral like neighbouring Austria. The Hungarians would have done well to take heed of the fate of East Germany. Three years earlier the East Germans suffering under Soviet policies had started protesting in East Berlin. When the unrest spread the Soviets responded by putting tanks on the streets and making mass arrests.

At the behest of a rival Hungarian government, Moscow proceeded to crush the Hungarian rising by again sending in the tanks. Hungary was violently herded back into line and its treatment served as a stark warning to the other members. Two years later, though, Romania demanded all Soviet troops withdraw from its soil, effectively making itself independent of the Pact's command and control structure. Surprisingly, Moscow complied.

Then on 20 August 1968 Soviet troops, this time supported by Bulgarian, East German and Hungarian forces, invaded Czechoslovakia to prevent it leaving. Albania declared itself neutral in protest and was allowed to go. A third invasion almost took place in 1981 when the anti-Soviet Solidarity movement demanded reforms in Poland. To pre-empt the Warsaw Pact from intervening the Polish government, with troops massing on its borders, declared martial law. A decade later the Pact finally came to an end with the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

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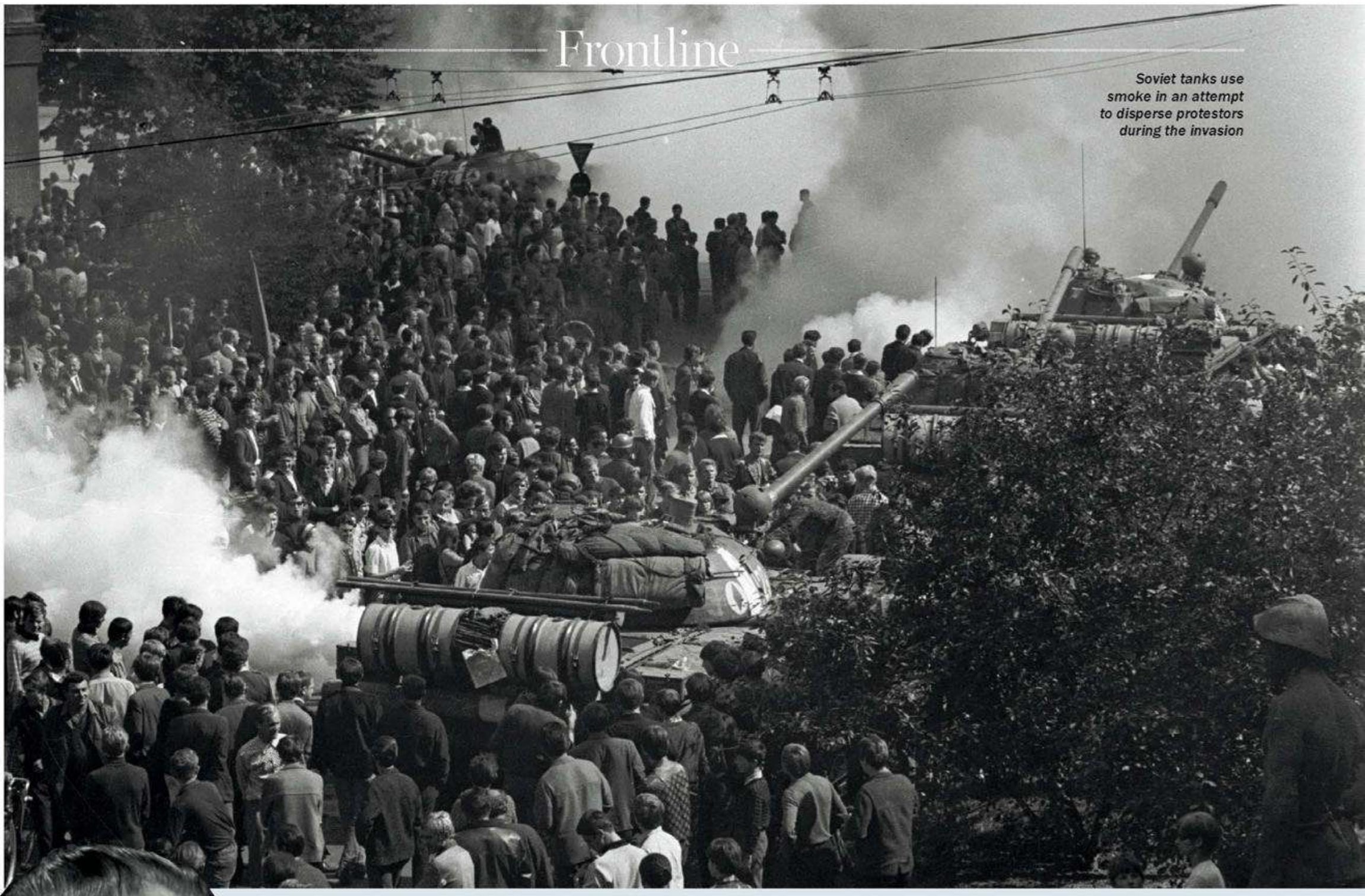


Soviet tanks use smoke in an attempt to disperse protestors during the invasion

INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

In 1968, Soviet troops swept across the Czech border in an attempt to crush a wave of liberal protests engulfing the country

On the night of 20-21 August 1968, some 2,000 tanks and 175,000 Warsaw Pact troops marched into Czechoslovakia to give military support "in the struggle against the rightist, anti-socialist and counter-revolutionary forces". In reality, this was an invasion, the result of the Soviet Union's fears that the liberal acts introduced in the country (the so-called 'Prague Spring') could result in a wave of similar reforms and maybe even revolutions.

Over the previous eight months, Czechoslovakian First Secretary Alexander Dubcek introduced a number of political and social reforms, dubbed the Action Program. Although he never tried to destroy the existing communist system he did attempt to liberalise it, resulting in his ideology being nicknamed 'Socialism with a Human Face'. Under Dubcek there was increased freedom of speech, the rehabilitation of political

Alexander Dubcek, who initiated a number of reforms which resulted in the so-called 'Prague Spring'

Czechoslovakian protestors proudly wave their national flag as Soviet troops desperately try and extinguish a fire atop one of their tanks

Images © Alamy

dissidents, greater freedom of press, travel and assembly and a limit to the power of the secret police. Arguably the greatest reform was a lack of censorship. Political meetings and news were broadcast on television and on radio, journals such as the *Literarni Listy* (*Literary Pages*) featured established authors and playwrights speaking openly, and manifestos were published for the masses. As Anna J Stoneman described in her 2015 article *Socialism with a Human Face*: "This sudden exposure to third-party opinions and third-party information beyond Soviet propaganda emboldened the citizens to call out for increased democratic reforms."

As might have been expected, the authorities in the Soviet Union did not look upon Dubcek's 'Prague Spring' with any degree of favour. *Pravda*, a broadsheet newspaper and the official mouthpiece of the Soviet Union, widely condemned the changes in Czechoslovakia, stating: "The situation is such that the threat to the foundations of socialism in Czechoslovakia poses a threat to the vital interests of all socialist nations." A three-month period of surveillance and assessment was carried out which resulted in Dubcek being summoned to East Germany on 23 March 1968. Dubcek refused to end the Action Program and over the following months it only grew in popularity. By the 3 August, at a meeting of Warsaw Pact countries, the so-called Bratislava Declaration was composed which stated Czechoslovakia could continue "on the basis of the principles of equality, respect for sovereignty and national independence." From this, it appeared that Dubcek had won.

"COLLEGE STUDENT JAN PALACH COMMITTED SELF-IMMOLATION IN AN ACT OF PROTEST"

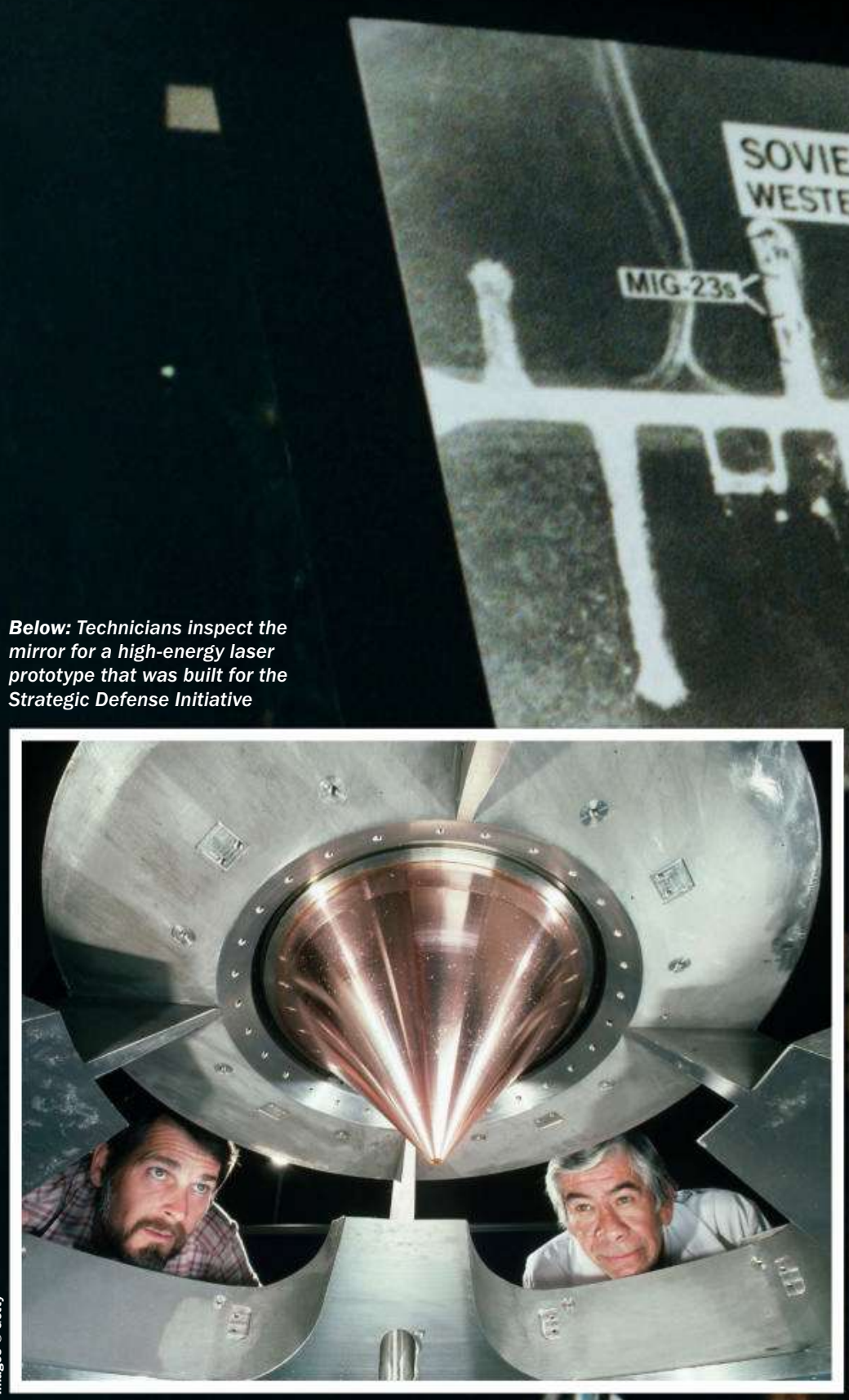
However, at midnight on 20 August Dubcek found himself appealing to his populace to "keep peace and not resist the advancing armies" as thousands of troops crossed the border. On the morning of 21 August, thousands of people took to the streets, tipping over buses and cars in an attempt to block the invaders' paths. Although students in particular held large demonstrations, most were largely non-violent in nature. Despite the peaceful and relatively passive resistance, in some cases soldiers opened fire and as a result the protests became more aggressive, with molotov cocktails thrown at the invading tanks. Dubcek himself then took to the air to denounce this violence, only to be captured shortly afterwards. Finding himself in Moscow, Dubcek was forced to approve the military occupation, as well as complete censorship.

Meanwhile the resistance continued. Czech Radio broadcast a call to strike and also appealed to railway workers to "go slow" in order to delay equipment for the occupying troops. Leaflets were distributed by police cars who used their official status (as well as their emergency sirens) to pass through checkpoints unhindered. Secret meetings took place, anti-Soviet graffiti was common and numerous petitions were signed. By 24 August, Soviet forces intensified their efforts and began to carry out searches. A week after the invasion had begun some 186 civilians had been killed and 362 seriously wounded. Resistance to the occupation didn't end, with demonstrations in November; in January 1969 college student Jan Palach committed self-immolation in an act of protest, inspiring numerous others to do the same.

Yet the Soviet forces were resolute. In March 1969, following continued demonstrations, Dubcek was ousted and replaced with the Soviet hardliner Gustav Husack. The Warsaw Pact countries involved in the invasion would defend their actions, stating in a letter that: "The defence of socialism in Czechoslovakia is not only a domestic affair of that country's people, but, as you all realise, a question of safeguarding the security of our countries, of defending the positions of world socialism." Looking back on the Prague Spring in 1988, Dubcek lamented that: "It is my firm conviction that without the external intervention in the situation of our party and our Czechoslovak society, our endeavour would have been crowned with success."

REAGAN'S STAR WARS

In the 1980s the USA attempted to fight the Cold War on a new front – space – with potentially horrifying consequences



***Below:** Technicians inspect the mirror for a high-energy laser prototype that was built for the Strategic Defense Initiative*

Images © Getty

The term ‘Star Wars’ is very firmly associated with the multi-billion dollar movie franchise, but it also became shorthand for President Ronald Reagan’s ill-fated Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) – America’s attempt to militarise space at the height of the Cold War. This preempted the recent creation of the US Space Force by over two decades.

President Reagan gave his famous ‘Star Wars’ speech on 23 March 1983, in which he announced an “intensive effort to define a long-term research and development programme to begin to achieve our ultimate goal of eliminating the threat posed by strategic nuclear missiles”. This defence system, it was argued, would render such weaponry obsolete and end the nuclear arms race. It could end the concept of mutually assured destruction (MAD) and even end the Cold War. Reagan’s initiative was partly in response to the Soviet Galosh anti-ballistic missile system designed to protect Moscow and the phased array radar at Krasnoyarsk in Siberia. These potentially gave the Soviet Union a limited nuclear war fighting capability.

Alarm bells began to ring around the world, especially in the Soviet Union, as the SDI programme would undermine the whole concept of deterrence and MAD. Furthermore, it could provide America a viable nuclear war fighting capability. SDI could have given America the ability to shoot down Soviet satellites, thereby blinding the Soviet Union. It could have also enabled the Americans to attack Soviet intercontinental ballistic missiles at their slow-boost phase as they rose from their silos and submarines, or in their mid-course phase while in space. America could survive an enemy first strike and retaliate, or it could launch a pre-emptive attack and then defeat any missiles that escaped destruction. ‘Star Wars’ would enable America to replace MAD with assured survival. In other words, it could win a nuclear war.

Overnight ‘Star Wars’ threatened to weaken nuclear deterrence and had the potential to make a Third World War more likely if the fear of MAD was removed. It also threatened to undermine the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile and the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaties, which had restricted ABM defence and banned the use of ABMs in space. The Reagan administration argued that the Soviet radar at Krasnoyarsk was already in violation of the ABM treaty. The Soviets had an extensive air defence system and it was feared the radars supporting this could be upgraded for ABM purposes. The Soviet Union was also developing ground-based lasers that could shoot down missiles and blind radars. American intelligence assessed that the Soviets could have a prototype space-based anti-satellite weapon by 1990 that could conceivably be used against missiles.

By 1986 Reagan had spent $3.7 billion on research into space- and ground-based lasers, particle beam weapons, kinetic energy weapons and nuclear induced X-ray lasers. All these weapons were intended to intercept and destroy Soviet missiles. The idea was that they would provide America with a multi-layered defence. If such a system worked America would have a protective umbrella that could neutralise the Soviet Union’s nuclear arsenal.

The major flaw was there could be no cast-iron guarantee that SDI would be 100 per cent effective. Furthermore, even if such a system were deployed it could only really be tested in wartime. Calculations indicated that 12 per cent of Soviet missiles would get through and that making the SDI ‘umbrella’ leak-proof was impossible. The space arms race proved prohibitively costly for both sides. The Soviet Union’s ground-based lasers alone required $1 billion a year to develop. As a result, SDI did not come to fruition and both sides largely abandoned the militarisation of space by the early 1990s. Nonetheless, the US Space Command formed in 1985 lasted until 2002. It was re-established in 2019 amidst much media fanfare and included the provision for the creation of a dedicated Space Force. The latter was met by derision, but again raised the prospect of ‘Star Wars’ becoming a reality.

“‘STAR WARS’ WOULD ENABLE AMERICA TO REPLACE MUTUALLY ASSURED DESTRUCTION WITH ASSURED SURVIVAL. IN OTHER WORDS, IT COULD WIN A NUCLEAR WAR”

Reagan addresses the nation, announcing the Strategic Defense Initiative

Control room at a nuclear missile base outside of Moscow

© Getty

ABLE ARCHER THE BRINK OF OBLIVION

In 1983 a NATO military exercise roleplayed a nuclear war but came dangerously close to starting the real thing

Following the development of the atomic bomb at the end of the Second World War, the United States and the USSR found themselves in a bitter arms race. In the decades following, both had their fingers poised over the nuclear button. Yet arguably one of the closest points the world came to nuclear war was not the Cuban Missile Crisis, it was a NATO military exercise that took place between 7-12 November 1983.

The exercise, named Able Archer, was an annual NATO operation and part of the Autumn Forger manoeuvres that involved 100,000 personnel, some 16,000 of which were flown in from the United States. Able Archer was the culmination of Forger and was designed to end with a simulated nuclear strike following a theoretical Warsaw Pact invasion of Western Europe. Although the Soviet Union would have been aware the annual training event was due to take place, Able Archer 83 differed in many ways from its predecessors. First, there were large periods of radio silence, as well as encrypted messages. Second, the imaginary forces were moved to high alert and there have even been reports of fake missiles with dummy warheads being taxied out of hangers. Finally, senior officials were involved, with even President Ronald Reagan himself scheduled to participate, although he would later drop out.

The military planners behind Able Archer 83 cannot have been fully aware that for some time the Warsaw Pact countries had been increasingly paranoid about the potential of a US nuclear attack. Reagan had taken office in 1981 and already proven himself aggressive in his approach towards the USSR. In March 1983, just a few short months before Able Archer, he had referred to the Soviet Union as an "evil empire" and announced his intent to build the 'Star Wars' space-based anti-missile programme.

That same year, the US deployed Pershing II nuclear missiles at its bases in West Germany, able to reach a Soviet target in less than ten minutes. Project RYaN (short for the Russian 'Raketno-Yadernoe Napadenie' and meaning 'Nuclear Missile Attack') was a symptom

Pershing II missiles were deployed by the US at bases in West Germany

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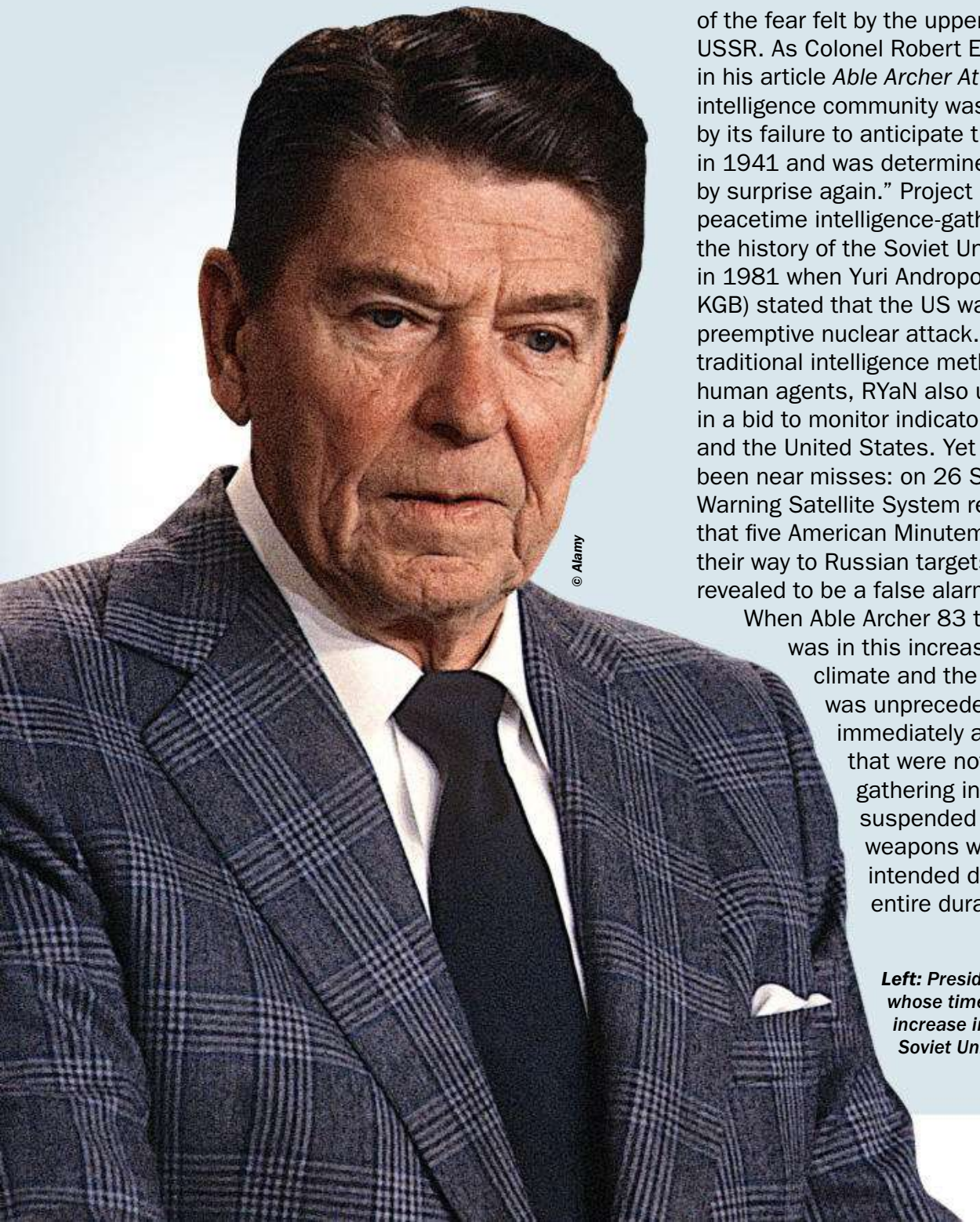
***Above:** US troops in winter gear participate in a NATO exercise for the defence of Norway in 1984. There were numerous NATO exercises for different scenarios*



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of the fear felt by the upper echelons of the USSR. As Colonel Robert E Hamilton noted in his article *Able Archer At 35*: "The Soviet intelligence community was still traumatised by its failure to anticipate the German attack in 1941 and was determined not to be taken by surprise again." Project RYaN, the largest peacetime intelligence-gathering operation in the history of the Soviet Union, was announced in 1981 when Yuri Andropov (head of the KGB) stated that the US was preparing for a preemptive nuclear attack. As well as using traditional intelligence methods, including human agents, RYaN also utilised computers in a bid to monitor indicators from both NATO and the United States. Yet there had already been near misses: on 26 September the Early Warning Satellite System registered a warning that five American Minuteman missiles were on their way to Russian targets. The warning was revealed to be a false alarm.

When Able Archer 83 took place, it was in this increasingly paranoid climate and the Soviet response was unprecedented. Almost immediately all flight operations that were not intelligence-gathering in nature were suspended and nuclear weapons were taken to their intended delivery units. For the entire duration of Able Archer, aircraft in Poland and East Germany were kept armed and fuelled. Towards the end of Able Archer, on 8-9 November, the recent massacre of French and American Troops in Beirut caused a tightening of security on overseas US air bases. Alongside the ongoing panic as a result of Able Archer, this caused heightened anxiety among Soviet intelligence. Perhaps most disturbingly, a 30-minute readiness time for a full nuclear strike was imposed. They would remain on alert until the end of Able Archer, on 11 November.

It would be some time before the extent of the Soviet war scare became apparent to US intelligence officers. Despite defector Oleg Gordievsky informing both MI6 and the CIA, it was only the former who believed him. After being briefed, Margaret Thatcher ordered her officials to "urgently consider how to approach the Americans on the question of possible Soviet misapprehensions about a surprise NATO attack". In 1990 the President's Foreign Advisory Board crafted a top secret report entitled *The Soviet War Scare* which made clear the threat posed by Able Archer, stating that the US "may have inadvertently placed our relations with the Soviet Union on a hair trigger". General Yesin, an operator of SS-20 missiles targeted at Western Europe, stated years later that: "We knew that NATO was doing an exercise although we couldn't fully eliminate the possibility that a nuclear strike could be delivered."

***Left:** President Ronald Reagan, whose time in office saw an increase in tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States*

© Getty

AMERICA'S DAY OF INFAMY

PEARL HARBOR

80 YEARS 1941–2021

Eight decades ago the course of WWII took a monumental shift when Japan launched its devastating attack on US military installations in the Pacific. The attack marked America's entry into the war – one of the major turning points in the world's greatest conflict

WORDS MICHAEL HASKEW

The superstructure of the battleship USS Arizona buckles as smoke and flames leap from the stricken vessel following a catastrophic explosion

The political wrangling, threat and counter-threat, had swirled for months – apparently to no avail. For the government of Japan there appeared to be no alternative to war with the United States, the nation's powerful rival for preeminence in the Pacific and Asia.

To that end, the First Air Fleet of the Imperial Japanese Navy had sortied from the home waters of Hitokappu Bay on 26 November 1941, its mission: to destroy the US Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor and damage, as much as possible, other US military installations on the island of Oahu, Hawaii. The fleet had sailed in secrecy and days later was in position to mount the air strike that would bring Japan and the industrial colossus of the United States, at long last, to war.

The thunderbolt of Japanese naval aviation, 353 combat aircraft, were to be launched in the predawn hours of 7 December 1941, swiftly strike their targets and return to the six aircraft carriers of the First Air Fleet, Akagi, Kaga, Soryu, Hiryu, Shokaku and Zuikaku, for the homeward voyage before any retaliatory attack could take place. On the eve of the strike, Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, in tactical command of the naval force, called all hands aboard Akagi to attention. Invoking the memory of Admiral Horatio Nelson at Trafalgar, he read a message from Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet: "The rise or fall of the empire depends on this battle. Everyone will do his duty to the utmost."

Failure of diplomacy

The attack on Pearl Harbor, which plunged the US into World War II 80 years ago, was the culmination of many months of growing tension between Imperial Japan and the United States. As Japan's militaristic government sought to expand its territory and access to vital natural resources across the Asian mainland and the Pacific, the United States watched warily.

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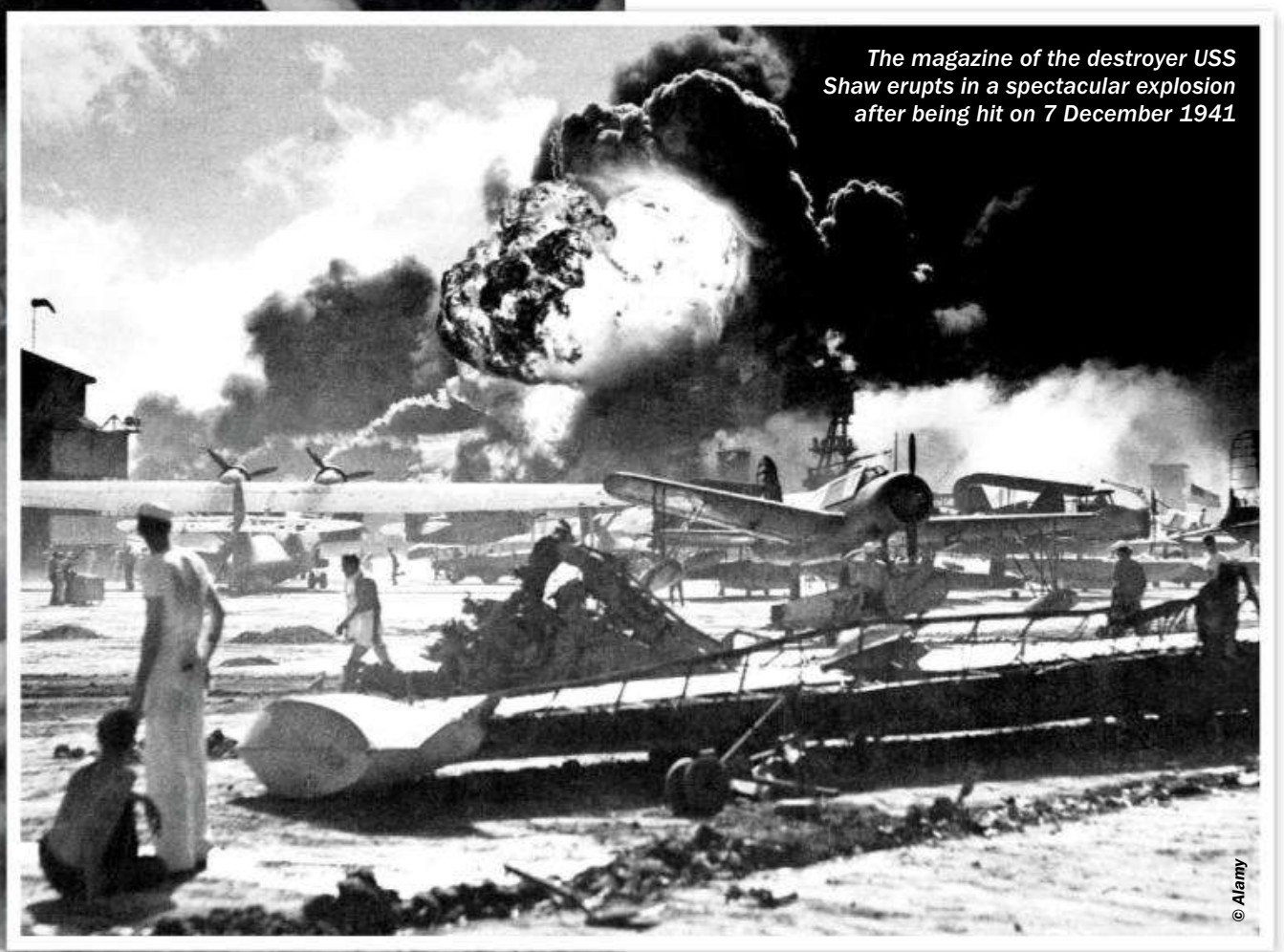


The magazine of the destroyer USS Shaw erupts in a spectacular explosion after being hit on 7 December 1941

© Alamy

The Japanese invaded China in 1931, and then declared all-out war against their neighbour in 1937. That December, an international incident occurred when Japanese planes sank the American gunboat USS Panay on the Yangtze River. A formal apology and payment of reparations to the United States did little to salve to the wound. Negotiations followed negotiations as the Japanese furthered their interests in China and fortified islands in the Pacific that had been given to the country under mandate after the First World War.

After the fall of France to Nazi Germany in the spring of 1940, the Japanese occupied northern French Indochina, prompting US President Franklin D Roosevelt to order the Pacific Fleet forward from its base in San Diego, California, to Pearl Harbor that May. Soon the Japanese had occupied all of French Indochina, and by the summer of 1941 the United States was calling for the immediate withdrawal of Japanese troops from the French colonial possession. Continuing US economic sanctions had also begun to hinder the ability of Japan to sustain its military machine. The island nation imported up to 80 percent of its oil from the United States, but along with the embargo of that precious commodity other materials such as scrap iron, bronze, copper, steel and machinery were forbidden for export as well.

To the Japanese, the very survival of their nation was at stake. Acquiescing to the American withdrawal demand meant a loss of 'face', and there was no end in sight to the stifling embargoes. Their only option, they believed, was war with the United States.

Japan girds for war

"The attack on Pearl Harbor was the seminal event of the Second World War," says Mark Stille, author of *The United States Navy in World War II: From Pearl Harbor to Okinawa.* "It brought the full power of the United States into the war with enough time to shape the outcome. It virtually guaranteed that the Americans would fight the war to its finish. For the Japanese, it was the ultimate folly. It undermined their vague notion that the United States would succumb to war weariness and lead to a negotiated settlement."

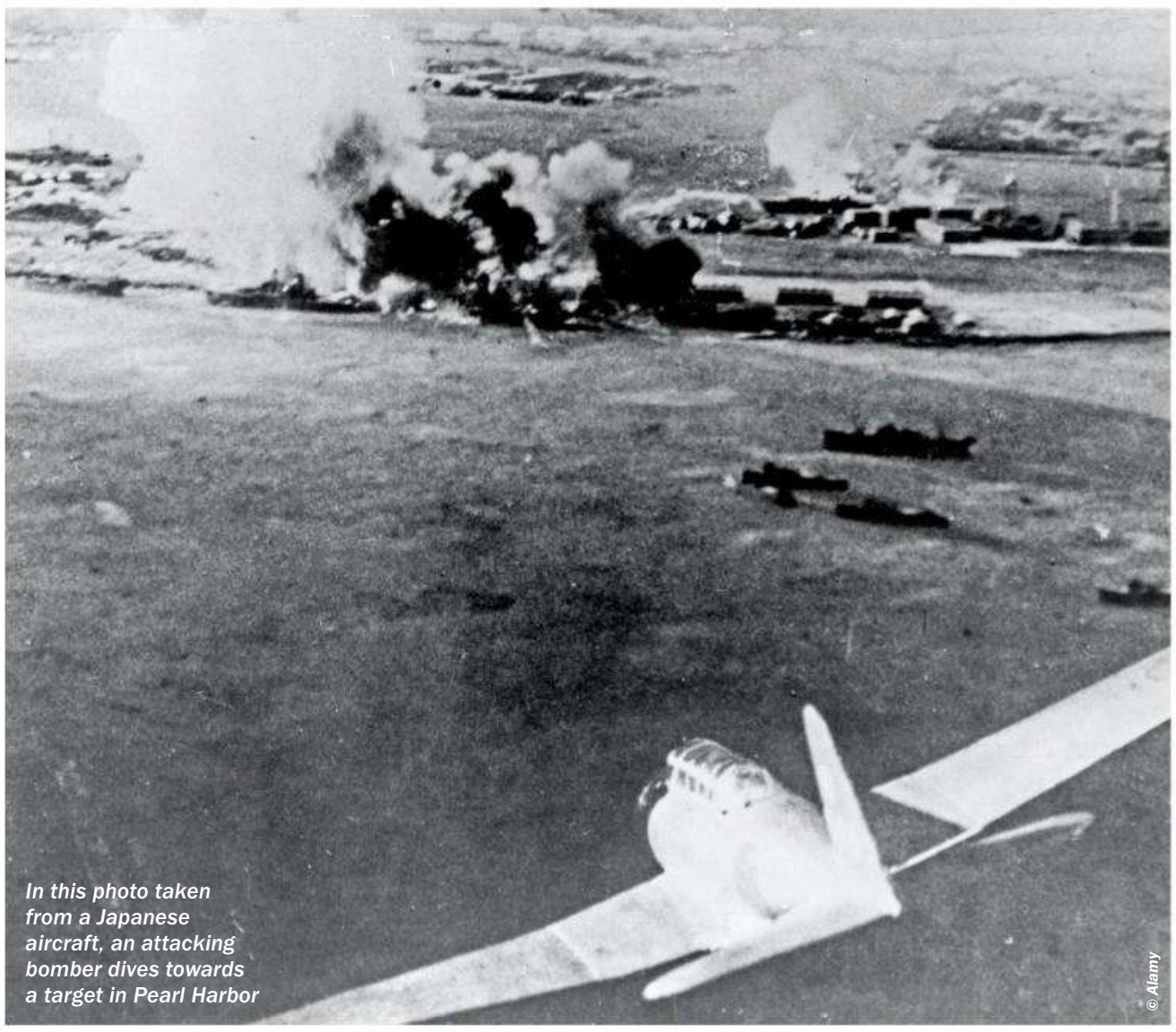
Nevertheless, Imperial Japan pursued the strategy of a preemptive strike against the US Pacific Fleet, primarily driven by the will and overwhelming influence of Admiral Yamamoto. He had studied at Harvard University and served as a naval attaché in Washington, DC, in the 1920s. He strongly believed that American industrial might would prevail in a protracted war and sought an early victory that would cripple US naval power in the Pacific to such an extent that a negotiated peace would leave Japan in control of its far-flung Asia-Pacific empire with a free hand for expansion.

Yamamoto once described war with the United States succinctly: "If I am told to fight regardless of the consequences, I shall run wild for the first six months or a year, but I have utterly no confidence for the second or third year."

Preparation and prowess

After months of preparation and intense training, the Japanese naval aircrews were deemed ready for the strike. Their torpedoes were modified to run at shallow depths, while 14-inch naval artillery shells were reconfigured for use as aerial bombs.

Lieutenant Commander Minoru Genda was charged with developing the attack plan, while Lieutenant Commander Mitsuo Fuchida was selected to lead the air assault. Fuchida vividly



In this photo taken from a Japanese aircraft, an attacking bomber dives towards a target in Pearl Harbor

© Alamy

AMERICA UNDER ATTACK

In addition to Pearl Harbor, Japanese aircraft struck several other American installations on 7 December 1941

Although the most well-known and remembered Japanese target on 7 December 1941 was the US Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, the attackers also wreaked havoc at several other installations.

Facilities and personnel of the US Navy, Marine Corps and Army came under fire on that dreadful morning as the Japanese hit Hickam Field, Wheeler Field, Bellows Field and Ewa Marine Corps Air Station; as well as the naval air stations at Kaneohe and on Ford Island in the centre of Pearl Harbor. The Japanese also struck American installations in the Philippines, Wake Island and Midway Atoll, and the British in Malaya during the hours following the Pearl Harbor attack.

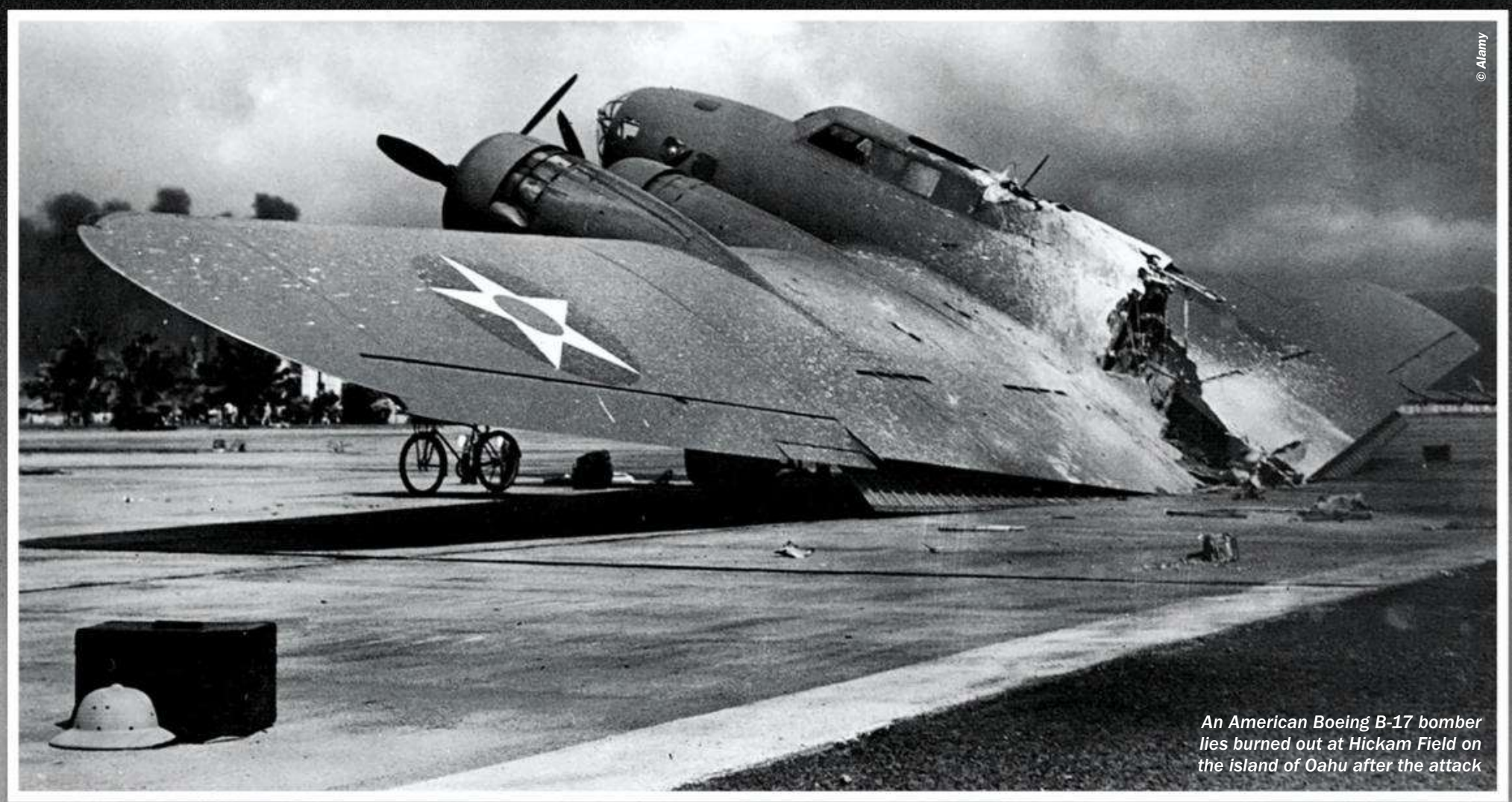
Bombers and fighters from the Japanese aircraft carriers screamed down on targets across Oahu. American aircraft had been parked wingtip to wingtip to guard against potential sabotage rather than dispersed in protective concrete or earthen revetments, and they made easy targets. Hickam Field and Ford Island came under attack just before 8am.

As the first bombs fell on Ford Island Naval Air Station, Lieutenant Commander Logan Ramsey, the operations officer of Patrol Wing Two, ordered the radio room to send the plain-language message: "Air Raid Pearl Harbor. This is no drill." One hangar took five bomb hits, and others were damaged. At Hickam Field, 35 men were killed while they were eating breakfast when a Japanese bomb destroyed the mess hall. More than 20 others were killed as they readied bombers for training flights. A large barracks was utterly destroyed. At Wheeler Field, where most of the island's fighter strength was stationed, Japanese dive bombers and fighters destroyed most of the 140 aircraft parked in neat rows.

Thirty-six Consolidated PBY Catalina seaplanes at Kaneohe were shredded by a dozen Japanese fighters in an attack that lasted only eight minutes. Just three planes at Kaneohe escaped damage from the two attack waves.

Bellows Field was strafed by a single Japanese fighter at about 8:30am, following a warning by one enlisted man that Kaneohe had been "blown to hell!" Twenty-nine of the 48 planes at Ewa Marine Corps Air Station were destroyed by a flight of 21 fighters that strafed unchallenged for more than 20 minutes.

Before the dreadful day was done, 165 American aircraft had been destroyed, with only a few of them after getting into the air.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An American Boeing B-17 bomber lies burned out at Hickam Field on the island of Oahu after the attack

"165 AMERICAN AIRCRAFT HAD BEEN DESTROYED, ONLY A FEW OF THEM AFTER GETTING INTO THE AIR"

Image: Wiki / PD / Gov

Hangar 6 on Ford Island burns after being bombed and strafed during the attack

A huge explosion tears through the battleship USS Arizona

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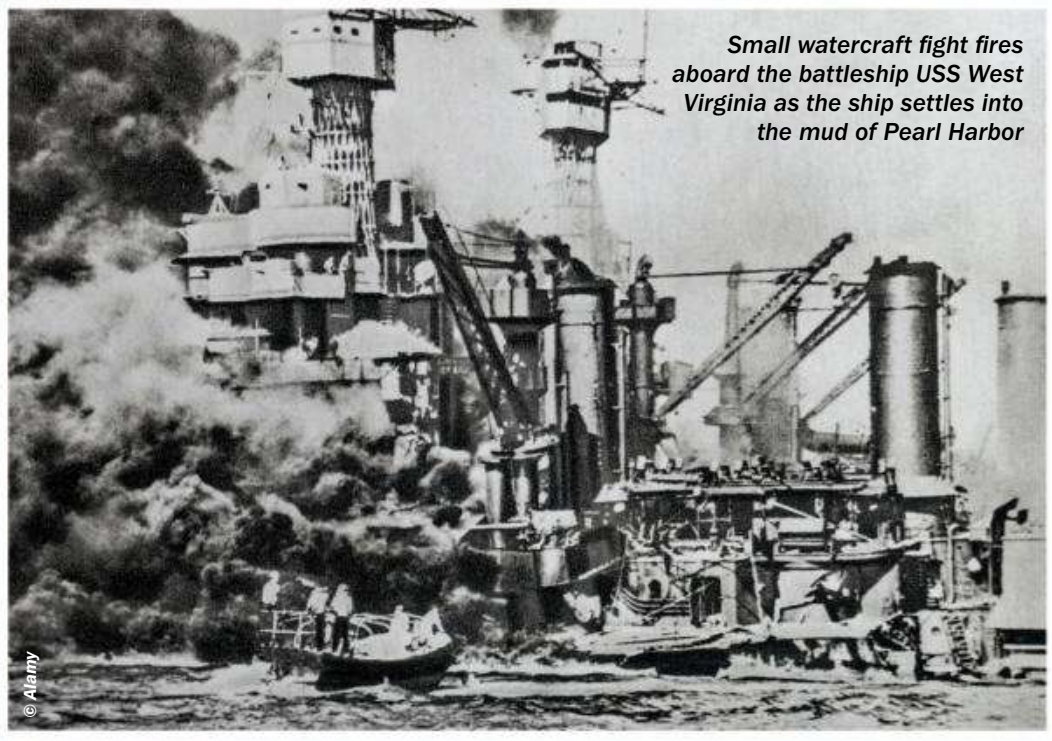

Small watercraft fight fires aboard the battleship USS West Virginia as the ship settles into the mud of Pearl Harbor

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Above: *The wakes of Japanese torpedoes streaking toward Battleship Row during the opening moments of the attack on Pearl Harbor*

remembered the flurry of activity aboard the Japanese aircraft carriers 230 miles off the north shore of Oahu on 7 December 1941.

"The battle flag was now flying at each masthead," he later wrote. "There was a heavy pitch and roll that had caused some hesitation about taking off in the dark. I decided it was feasible. Flight decks vibrated with the roar of aircraft engines warming up. Now a green lamp was waved in a circle. 'Take off!'… Within 15 minutes 183 fighters, bombers and torpedo planes had taken off from the six carriers and were forming up in the still-dark sky, guided only by the signal lights of the lead plane. After circling over the fleet formation, we set course due south for Pearl Harbor. The time was 6:15am."

Even as the Japanese first wave became airborne, early warnings of the impending attack were ignored. The minesweeper USS Condor reported a conning tower, and the patrolling destroyer USS Ward investigated but found nothing. Three hours later, the cargo ship Antares reported a periscope in its wake. This time Ward responded with a 4-inch shell from its No.3 turret right through the exposed conning tower of a Japanese midget submarine. This was followed by a pattern of depth charges and a report that the destroyer had engaged and sunk an unknown submarine "in defensive sea area".

Just after 7am, two US soldiers operating a radar station at Opana Point looked incredulously at a large blip on their screen. Reporting the sight to the duty officer at Fort Shafter, they were told not to worry since a flight of American bombers was expected in from the West Coast that morning. Logic, after all, said that the contact had to be the bombers.

In addition, at 3:30am Pacific Time US cryptanalysts in Washington, DC had decoded the last of a 14-part message from Tokyo to its emissaries who were engaged in ongoing negotiations there. The text seemed to indicate that Japan intended to open hostilities within hours. The warning that followed was delayed by atmospheric interference, and as an RCA civilian courier pedaled his bicycle toward the military base to deliver the message, Japanese planes were already bearing down on Pearl Harbor.

The American commanders on Oahu, Admiral Husband Kimmel and General Walter Short, had also been only on the periphery as American intelligence was gathered at higher echelons of command, contributing to their greater concern over potential fifth column sabotage than an air attack by the Imperial Japanese Navy.

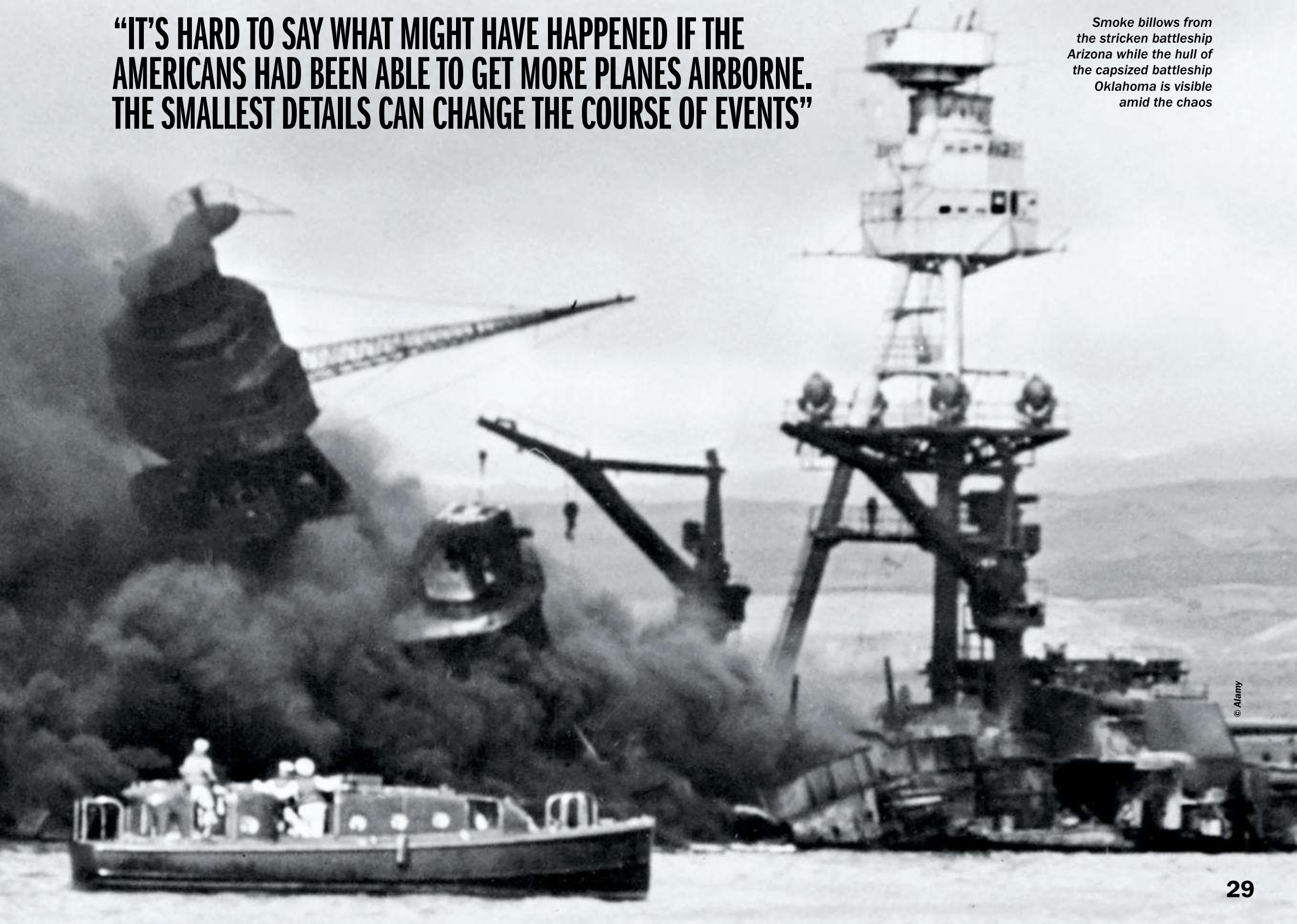
"There was a lot of intelligence available prior to Pearl Harbor, and most of it was misread," related Patrick K O'Donnell, bestselling author of *Into the Rising Sun: In Their Own Words, World War II's Pacific Veterans Reveal the Heart of Combat*. "Like all intelligence, it went up the chain of command, but in this case it didn't get to the right people to make the right decisions."

Further speculating on the element of surprise achieved by the Japanese, O'Donnell commented: "It's hard to say what might have happened if the Americans had been able to get more planes airborne; the smallest details can change the course of events. And what if the American aircraft carriers had been in the harbour? Or if the Japanese had hit the oil storage and other facilities that morning?"

Tora! Tora! Tora!

True enough, despite the fact that their primary targets, the American aircraft carriers Lexington, Enterprise and Saratoga, were operating at sea on 7 December, the die was cast and the Japanese executed their attack. Additionally, the attackers were preoccupied with inflicting as much damage as possible on the fleet itself, particularly the battleships moored along Battleship Row at the eastern end of Ford Island. Oklahoma, Maryland, West Virginia, Tennessee, Arizona and Nevada were sitting ducks there; while California, berthed some distance away, and Pennsylvania in Drydock 1, were also vulnerable.

"IT'S HARD TO SAY WHAT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED IF THE AMERICANS HAD BEEN ABLE TO GET MORE PLANES AIRBORNE. THE SMALLEST DETAILS CAN CHANGE THE COURSE OF EVENTS"



Smoke billows from the stricken battleship Arizona while the hull of the capsized battleship Oklahoma is visible amid the chaos

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PEARL HARBOR'S LASTING LEGACY

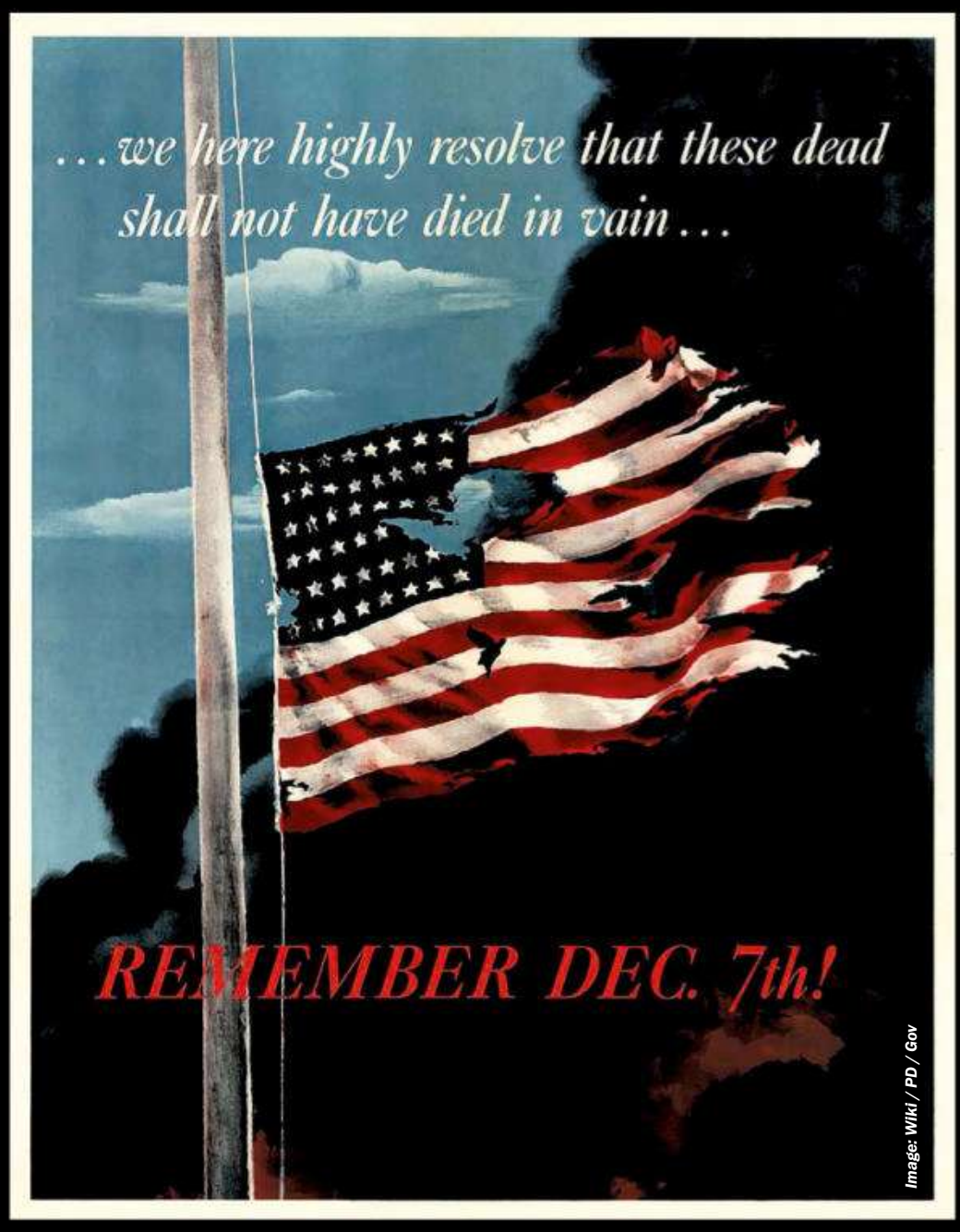
The deadly attack left an indelible imprint on the American psyche, spurring the nation to tremendous martial achievement during World War II

In the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, the consternation of the American people quickly turned to rage. Military recruiting offices overflowed with volunteers and patriotic sentiment soared, silencing a once robust isolationist movement. Scrap metal and rubber drives were common occurrences, and slogans such as "Slap the Japs with your metal scraps!" were plastered on posters across the country. American industry reached new levels of arms production, and the US Navy became the strongest in the world in an astonishingly short period of time. Its new Essex-class fleet aircraft carriers and fast Iowa-class battleships carried the Pacific War across the ocean's expanse to the doorstep of the Japanese home islands.

"The concept of the greatest generation was born," assessed David Kilton, chief of interpretation at the Pearl Harbor National Memorial. "The American people rose to the challenge before them, and it was a full-hearted response."

President Franklin D Roosevelt had gone to Congress to seek a declaration of war against Japanese the day after the attack and described 7 December 1941 as a "date which will live in infamy". No other event, with the exception of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, has given Americans such pause to contemplate their own survival and prosperity in the face of a determined enemy. Today, Americans remember the attack each year on 7 December: Pearl Harbor Day.

Thousands of visitors come to the Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor each year as well. Dedicated in 1962 and stretching above the wreckage of the battleship that also serves as a watery tomb for its dead, the memorial is designed with a depression in its centre and upswept outer edges symbolic of the final victory. Flowers of remembrance are left even by prefectures in Japan.



This patriotic poster is indicative of the fervour that gripped the people of the United States after Pearl Harbor

Image: Wiki / PD / Gov

The Arizona Memorial sits astride the sunken battleship on the eastern end of Ford Island in Pearl Harbor

Image: Wiki / PD / Gov

When Fuchida realised that complete surprise had been achieved, he sent the emphatic message "Tora! Tora! Tora!" (Tiger! Tiger! Tiger!) to Nagumo in confirmation. Seconds later, all hell broke loose on Battleship Row. Japanese torpedoes caused Oklahoma to capsize and sink; West Virginia settled to the harbour bottom, holed by seven torpedoes, as counterflooding allowed the wounded warship to stay on an even keel. The battleship Utah, on the other side of Ford Island, was hit by two torpedoes and capsized.

From the air, Fuchida witnessed a tremendous explosion on Battleship Row. The shockwave buffeted his aircraft, and it was apparent that one of the battleships had been heavily damaged. Arizona, in fact, had been wracked by a direct hit from one of the modified naval artillery shells. The ship sank swiftly with the loss of more than 1,100 sailors and officers, nearly half the total American death count of 2,403. Every battleship in the harbour sustained damage, while the magazine of the destroyer Shaw detonated in a terrific explosion that blew off the ship's bow completely. Miraculously, Shaw

Sailors place leis on the graves of fallen American service personnel killed in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor

was repaired and returned to service. The destroyers Cassin and Downes, in dry dock with Pennsylvania, were total losses.

Amid the two waves of aerial destruction, the cruisers Raleigh, Honolulu, Detroit and St Louis were damaged, and the seaplane tender Curtiss was also hit. The elderly minelayer Oglala was sunk and other vessels also sustained damage. By the time the last of the Japanese planes was speeding back to its carrier, Pearl Harbor was in chaos, thick smoke belching skyward from Battleship Row as rescue efforts were launched.

Only 29 Japanese planes and five midget submarines were lost in the attack, but dozens of planes – particularly those in the second wave – were riddled with bullet holes as American antiaircraft crews had been alerted during the first wave.

Immediate assessment would indicate a tremendous Japanese victory; however, aside from the targets that were left unscathed there were other considerations. "Despite being initially surprised, the Americans quickly responded and fought back effectively," asserts Stille. "The total of damaged and destroyed

"I FEAR ALL WE HAVE DONE IS TO AWAKEN A SLEEPING GIANT AND FILL HIM WITH A TERRIBLE RESOLVE"

aircraft in the first wave reached 55, about a third of the 183 aircraft committed. Of the aircraft from the second wave, 20 were destroyed and 65 damaged – about half. Total Japanese losses indicate that any hypothetical third wave, which they did not seriously consider, would have been conducted by a much smaller attack force."

After-action assessment

Through the lens of history, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor appears to some historians to have been a strategic blunder. Stille offers: "The final proof that the Pearl Harbor attack was both a political and military failure is provided by the fact that only five months later the 'crippled' Pacific Fleet stopped the Japanese advance in the Coral Sea and the following month blunted the Imperial Navy's offensive capabilities at Midway. The primary reason for this quick recovery was the aggressive nature of the new commander of the Pacific Fleet, Chester Nimitz, and his carrier admirals."

Although it may be apocryphal, Admiral Yamamoto was said to have commented after Pearl Harbor: "I fear all we have done is to awaken a sleeping giant and fill him with a terrible resolve." Regardless of its origin, the statement accurately describes the nearly four years of world war that followed.

On the other side of the globe, one of Adolf Hitler's great blunders of the conflict occurred when Nazi Germany declared war on the United States on 11 December, four days after Pearl Harbor. Imperial Japan was destined to follow Hitler's regime in defeat, and when he learned the news of the action in far-off Hawaii, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill knew that his beleaguered country had acquired a strong military ally. Churchill later wrote that he "slept the sleep of the saved and thankful that night".

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SEVASTOPOL, CRIMEA, RUSSIAN EMPIRE
8 SEPTEMBER 1855

BATTLE OF MALAKOFF

The French launched a furious assault on the Russians defending the strategic Malakoff fort, and held it against a series of savage and bloody counterattacks

WORDS **WILLIAM E WELSH**

Russian reinforcements stand ready to defend bastions in the curtain wall during the final phase of the siege

Colonel Eduard Totleben, a gifted Russian military engineer trained at the prestigious School of Engineering in St Petersburg, arrived in Sevastopol in summer, 1854, to oversee the improvement of the Black Sea port's outdated defences. The 37-year-old, mustachioed engineer was appalled at what he found. Little had been done over the past several decades to improve the city's landward defences. Although the port was protected well enough from an attack by sea, it was extremely vulnerable to an attack by land. Yet at the outset of the Crimean War, it was just such a threat that had rapidly materialised when the British and French fleets suddenly appeared in the Black Sea, overwhelming the Russian Black Sea Fleet.

The old town of Sevastopol and the suburb of Karabel, where the dockyards and naval barracks were located, were protected on the landward side by a single 12-foot-high stone wall, but the edifice was not strong enough to withstand a sustained artillery bombardment. When it became apparent in July 1854 that large British and French armies planned to land on the Crimean Peninsula and strike out overland to capture the port, Totleben went to work to ensure that the city's defences could withstand a protracted siege.

To his astonishment, Totleben found that the city's arsenal contained neither sufficient building materials nor tools to improve the defences. He requested that these items be shipped to Sevastopol as quickly as possible. He also discovered that only about half of the cannon in the arsenal were serviceable. Added to all this, the garrison of 5,000 soldiers and 10,000 sailors in the city had almost no combat experience. "There was practically nothing to stop the enemy from walking into the city," he recalled.

The determined engineer soon had the men, women and children of the city, as well as the soldiers and sailors of the garrison, toiling day and night to improve the city's defences. They assembled fascines and gabions, dug trenches and constructed booby traps. The construction work did not stop when the British, French, Sardinians, and Turks arrived before the walls of the city in late September, and the work continued unabated even as enemy shells began to fall on the city.

OPPOSING FORCES

FRENCH ARMY

LEADER
General Aimable Pélissier

TROOPS
120,000

GUNS
592

VS

RUSSIAN ARMY

General Mikhail Gorchakov

TROOPS
38,000

GUNS
360

© Alamy

Russia moves aggressively against Turkey

Following the Napoleonic Wars, Imperial Russia grew ever stronger while the Ottoman Empire grew steadily weaker. Tsar Nicholas II decided to wage war against Turkey and gave as the rationale for his aggression that he wanted to protect Christian peoples and holy sites in the Near East that were occupied by the Turks. A Russian army invaded the Turkish provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia in summer 1853, prompting Turkey to declare war on Imperial Russia. Next, the Russian Black Sea fleet sank the Turkish fleet at Sinope on 30 November.

Unwilling to allow the tsar to increase his territory at the expense of Turkey, much less establish a protectorate over Palestine, Britain's Queen Victoria and France's Emperor Louis Napoleon moved in concert with each other to quash Russia's aggression against its weak neighbour to the south.

Great Britain and France issued ultimatums to Russia. When the tsar did not heed these ultimatums in a timely manner, the two countries declared war on Russia in March 1854, and Turkey joined their alliance. The Allies deployed the vanguard of their expeditionary forces to Varna, Bulgaria, a few months later for a possible invasion of the Crimea in order to capture Sevastopol. Although the tsar pulled his troops out of Wallachia and Moldavia a short time later, it was not enough to produce peace. At that stage, the Allies sought nothing less than the destruction of Russia's Black Sea fleet.

Allies invade the Crimea

Totleben reported to vice admirals Pavel Nachimov and Vladimir Kornilov of the Black Sea Fleet. Although the admirals served as co-commanders of the Sevastopol garrison, General Prince Alexander Menshikov commanded the 37,000 Russian troops in the western Crimea whose job it would be to contest the Allies advance once they landed. The Allied fleet set sail from Varna in late August, but it encountered bad weather that

The French assault on the Malakoff redoubt was so swift and sudden that the Russian defenders could not hold the position

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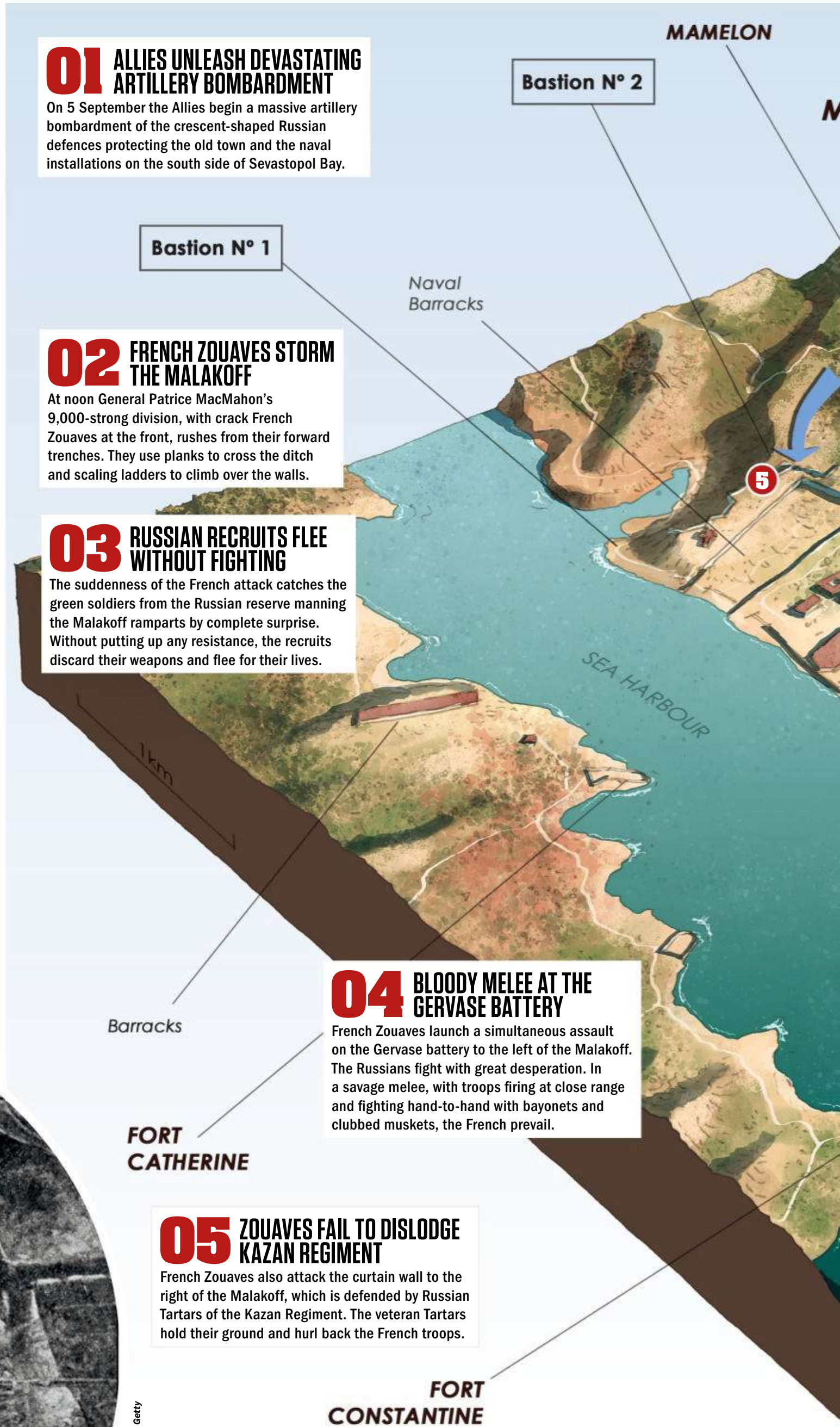


01 ALLIES UNLEASH DEVASTATING ARTILLERY BOMBARDMENT

On 5 September the Allies begin a massive artillery bombardment of the crescent-shaped Russian defences protecting the old town and the naval installations on the south side of Sevastopol Bay.

02 FRENCH ZOUAVES STORM THE MALAKOFF

At noon General Patrice MacMahon's 9,000-strong division, with crack French Zouaves at the front, rushes from their forward trenches. They use planks to cross the ditch and scaling ladders to climb over the walls.

03 RUSSIAN RECRUITS FLEE WITHOUT FIGHTING

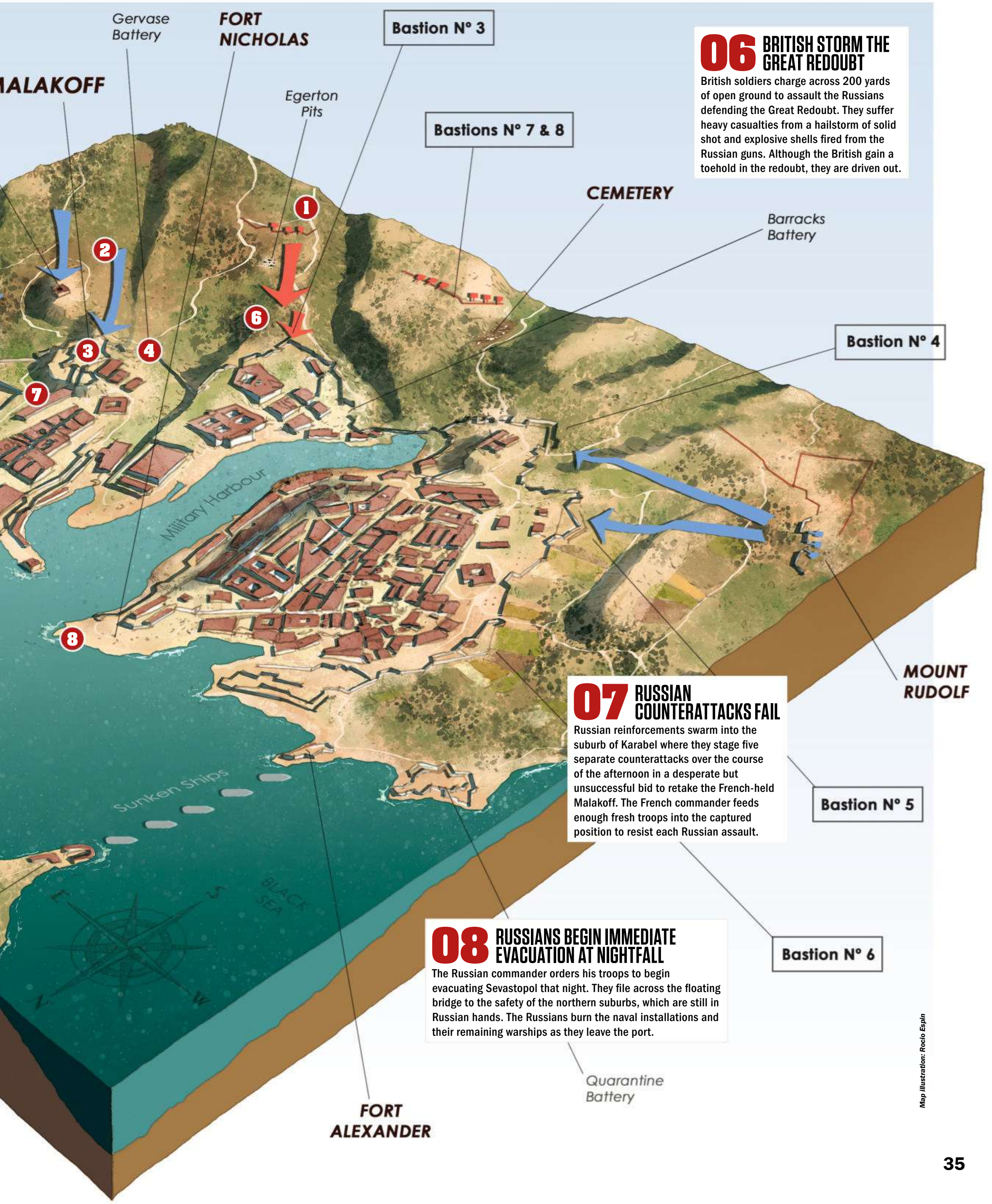
The suddenness of the French attack catches the green soldiers from the Russian reserve manning the Malakoff ramparts by complete surprise. Without putting up any resistance, the recruits discard their weapons and flee for their lives.

04 BLOODY MELEE AT THE GERVASE BATTERY

French Zouaves launch a simultaneous assault on the Gervase battery to the left of the Malakoff. The Russians fight with great desperation. In a savage melee, with troops firing at close range and fighting hand-to-hand with bayonets and clubbed muskets, the French prevail.

05 ZOUAVES FAIL TO DISLODGE KAZAN REGIMENT

French Zouaves also attack the curtain wall to the right of the Malakoff, which is defended by Russian Tartars of the Kazan Regiment. The veteran Tartars hold their ground and hurl back the French troops.



06 BRITISH STORM THE GREAT REDOUBT

British soldiers charge across 200 yards of open ground to assault the Russians defending the Great Redoubt. They suffer heavy casualties from a hailstorm of solid shot and explosive shells fired from the Russian guns. Although the British gain a toehold in the redoubt, they are driven out.

07 RUSSIAN COUNTERATTACKS FAIL

Russian reinforcements swarm into the suburb of Karabel where they stage five separate counterattacks over the course of the afternoon in a desperate but unsuccessful bid to retake the French-held Malakoff. The French commander feeds enough fresh troops into the captured position to resist each Russian assault.

08 RUSSIANS BEGIN IMMEDIATE EVACUATION AT NIGHTFALL

The Russian commander orders his troops to begin evacuating Sevastopol that night. They file across the floating bridge to the safety of the northern suburbs, which are still in Russian hands. The Russians burn the naval installations and their remaining warships as they leave the port.

Map illustration: Rocio Espin

delayed its passage to the Crimea. The Allied fleet arrived in Calamita Bay on 13 September and began slowly landing troops at the port of Eupatoria just 40 miles north of Sevastopol.

Menshikov proved unable to stop the advance of the Allied army. On 20 September he suffered a tactical defeat in the Battle of Alma ten miles south of where the Allies landed. He withdrew inland to save his army from destruction, thereby leaving the road to Sevastopol wide open.

The British and French armies established new supply bases at the tip of the Crimean Peninsula in October that were in close proximity to their siege lines. The new British base was at Balaclava and the French base at Kamiesh. Russian reinforcements arriving from the Danubian front under General Pavel Liprandi on 25 October attacked the British forces defending their supply corridor to Balaclava. The battle was a draw, and the Russians withdrew.

Siege of Sevastopol

While the Russian forces in the field attempted to distract the Allies, the commanders of the garrison took steps to prevent the Allied fleet from entering Sevastopol Bay. At Totleben's suggestion, the Russian admirals sank seven of their ships in the mouth of the bay on 23 September. The admirals assigned the sailors from the destroyed ships to man the city's artillery batteries. With the addition of more soldiers and sailors, the city's garrison doubled in size to 31,000 troops. Meanwhile, Totleben put Sevastopol's 38,000 residents to work improving the city's defences.

Most construction occurred on the south side of the city. On the north, the city was protected by a crescent-shaped series of fortifications replete with artillery batteries. Sailors and marines had offloaded naval guns from the Russian warships before they were sunk at the mouth of the harbour, and these were employed in defence of the curtain wall and bastions.

The southern forts and bastions were arrayed at intervals along the existing curtain walls that enclosed the Old Town and the Karabel suburb on the south side of Sevastopol Bay. It was here that Totleben brought his genius to bear. He doubled the number of bastions with batteries on the south walls from three to six. The southeast side was defended by the first three bastions, the second and third of which were named, respectively, the Little Redan and the Great Redan. The Malakoff fort, an enclosed redoubt, was situated between the two redans on the highest ground of the southern defences. The Malakoff was the key to the southern defences of the city because its gun emplacements were at a higher elevation than the other five bastions. The curtain wall defending the southwest approaches to the city were covered by bastions four through six, which the Russians had named the Flagstaff, Central and Quarantine bastions.

"BRITISH FORCES FELL TO 15,000 TROOPS DUE TO EXPOSURE, STARVATION AND DISEASE, WHICH WAS NEARLY HALF OF THE BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE'S ORIGINAL NUMBERS"

The Malakoff redoubt occupied the highest ground, and if the French captured it they could control the city

FitzRoy Somerset, Lord Raglan, commanding the British forces, conferred with General Francois Canrobert, the leader of the French forces, and together they agreed to lay siege to the city from the south. They entrenched on the uplands south of the city, which the Russians had left unfortified.

The Russians mounted 220 guns in defence of the south side of the city. In contrast, the Allies initially had just 126 guns; however, the Allied fleet in the Black Sea repeatedly delivered more guns to the expeditionary forces over the course of the long siege. When the British established a new supply base at Balaklava, the French did the same at the port of Kamiesh. The Allies began the first of what eventually would be six bombardments of the Russian lines on 17 October, but the Russians won the first exchange when they silenced two French ordnance magazines.

French army heavily reinforced

The Allies launched no major assaults during the winter. British forces fell to 15,000 troops due to exposure, starvation and disease, which was nearly half of the British expeditionary force's original numbers. French Emperor Louis-Napoleon III more than made up for the shortfall, though, by sending 83,000 fresh troops to augment the Armee d'Orient in the first half of 1855.

Totleben improved the Russian defences by overseeing the construction of outerworks that protected the Malakoff and the Great Redan. Russian labourers dug entrenchments dubbed the Quarry Pits in front of the Great Redan and constructed a lunette on Mamelon hill in front of the Malakoff.

With additional French forces arriving, the French took responsibility for the left and right of the siege works, while the British held the centre of the line. The French received a new

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French Zouaves engage in bloody hand-to-hand fighting with Russian defenders at the Malakoff redoubt

commander in May when General Aimable Pelissier arrived to replace Canrobert whose health was rapidly failing. Upon assuming command, Pelissier pledged to capture the Mamelon as a prelude to a full-scale attack against the Malakoff.

Pelissier made good on his promise. By early summer the Franco-British army had amassed 550 guns. The French shelled the Mamelon and White Works on 6 June and then launched a furious assault against the positions. The officers conducting the assault had explicit orders only to secure the Mamelon and not to continue their advance against the Malakoff. The French streamed forward without scaling ladders. Despite the Russians firing down on them at point-blank range from the Mamelon hilltop, some of the intrepid soldiers scaled the 12-foot walls of the outerwork by hoisting each other up. The attack cost the French 7,500 casualties, but they succeeded in securing the Mamelon position. Possession of the Mamelon allowed them to advance their trenches closer to the Malakoff.

First attack on Malakoff fails

The French botched their first assault against the Malakoff on 18 June. Pelissier decided not to soften up the Malakoff with a preliminary bombardment because he believed it would only alert the Russians that an attack was imminent and allow them to rush reinforcements to the redoubt. The French attack began prematurely because of confusion regarding the signal to attack. The Russians mauled the first wave of attackers, who never had a chance to use their scaling ladders. The Russia artillerymen then trained their long-range guns on the successive waves of French infantry moving up to attack. Disgusted with the way the attack was executed, Pelissier called it off.

The Allies increased the frequency and duration of their bombardment of the Russian defences in the early summer in a bid to capture the city before winter set in. As many as 75,000 artillery rounds fell on the city each day. Totleben was seriously wounded by a shell on 22 June and he had to leave the army to convalesce.

Russian troops try to break the encirclement

As the Russian garrison's chances of winning the siege grew slimmer in the late summer, General Mikhail Gorchakov, the commander of the Sevastopol garrison, approved a new plan set out by military engineer General Fedor Bukhmeier. He tasked the Russian sailors with constructing a floating bridge across Sevastopol harbour from Fort Nicholas on the south side to Fort Michael on the north side. The purpose of the floating bridge, which was completed by the end of August, would be to evacuate the garrison in the event the Allies breached the port's outer defences.

While the bridge was under construction, the Russians were losing as many as 250 men each day to the Allied heavy guns. Because of this, Tsar Alexander II sent orders to Gorchakov instructing him to launch an attack that would break the Allied siege. "[You must] do something decisive to end this frightful massacre," the tsar wrote. Gorchakov complied with the order, even though he believed it was an unattainable objective.

The Russians attacked the Allied right flank on 16 August. Gorchakov committed 37,000 infantry in two corps against 27,000 French and Sardinian troops in what became known as the Battle of Chernaya. The Russian attack floundered in the face of strong resistance.

The attack had cost the Russians 6,200 casualties compared to Allied casualties of 1,800. A bad omen for the Russians was that 1,700 troops took the opportunity once outside of the Russian defences to desert the army. A steady stream of deserters left the city in the days that followed, slipping away at night or under the cloak of the morning fog.

Allied firepower overwhelms Russian forces

The Allies continued to add new guns to their siege works throughout the late summer. A bombardment that began on 17 August and lasted for four days cost the Russians 1,000 soldiers each day. By early September the combined weight of the British and French guns had done considerable damage to the Malakoff Redoubt. Without Totleben to direct work crews in patching up the weak spots in the defences, much of the damage went un-repaired. The Allies began their sixth bombardment on 5 September. Hundreds of guns pounded the Russian defences around the clock in preparation for an assault on 8 September.

Pelissier decided to launch his infantry attack at noon on the scheduled day when the Russians changed their pickets. He tripled the number of troops he had used in the failed attack in June, and planned to commit 13 divisions totalling 60,000 troops to the attack. General Patrice MacMahon's 9,000-strong division would bear the brunt of the assault on the Malakoff. Once it had been secured, Pelissier would give the signal for the remaining British and French troops participating in the attack to storm other parts of the Russian defences.

A Zouave soldier plants France's tricolour flag atop a tower on the Malakoff after the successful attack

The opposing sides engaged in a savage six-hour contest for control of the Little Redan north of the Malakoff redoubt

Images © Alamy

Pelissier left nothing to chance. He designated pioneers to accompany the attack to ensure the troops got over the walls as quickly as possible. In addition, French artillerymen accompanied the attack to spike the enemy guns.

French troops successfully storm Malakoff

The French Zouaves overran the Malakoff at noon on 8 September as planned while the Russians were changing pickets. The Russians had no time to cut down the Zouaves because the French had advanced their trenches to within 20 yards of the Malakoff. "The French were in the Malakoff before our boys had a chance to grab their guns," wrote Prokofii Podpalov, who was stationed nearby in the Great Redan. "In a few seconds they had filled the fort with hundreds of their men, and hardly a shot was fired from our side."

As soon as the French had control of the redoubt, a detachment of Zouaves planted the French Tricolour atop the Malakoff tower, an observation post inside the high ground on which the redoubt was situated. MacMahon moved to the front lines to supervise the defence of the Malakoff because he expected the Russians would launch a counterattack as soon as they could assemble a strike force from their reserves.

A half-mile to the north, though, the French assault did not go as well. The Russians manning the Little Redan had more time to react and the French troops assaulting that sector would spend the next six hours making repeated assaults against it.

With the Malakoff in French hands, Pelissier signalled to the British to begin their assault on the Great Redan a half-mile south of the Malakoff. The British attack against the Great Redan failed, and French assaults on the other side of the city against the Central and Flagstaff bastions also failed.

Russians fail to retake Malakoff

While some of MacMahon's troops were consolidating their position on the Malakoff, other parts of his division were fighting a savage hand-to-hand battle for control of the Gervase Battery a short distance to the south. Although the French won that contest, they could not dislodge the defenders of the curtain north of the Malakoff.

Hardly an hour had passed before the Russians counterattacked the Malakoff, charging the position with fixed bayonets. The fighting ebbed and flowed as each side fed fresh troops into the attack. "Time after time we charged them with our bayonets," said Anatoly Viazmitinov, a Russian soldier. "We simply hurled ourselves forward, totally intoxicated by the excitement of the fight."

Despite the great valour of the Russian forces, the French enjoyed numerical superiority in the struggle for the Malakoff. As the sun set over the battlefield, the French worked throughout the night to improve their defences inside the Malakoff. They even stacked dead Russians to use them as makeshift breastworks.

The Russians suffered 12,000 casualties and the French just 7,500 casualties in the bloody struggle for the Malakoff. French assaults in other sectors failed, but that was of no consequence because French guns in the Malakoff could drive the Russians out of nearly all other parts of the city's defences, as well as the city itself.

Russians evacuate Sevastopol

When he learned that the Malakoff Redoubt was firmly in French hands, Gorchakov issued orders on 9 September for an immediate evacuation of the troops to the northern suburbs via the recently completed floating bridge. He ordered the evacuation because he feared the Allies might shell the boat bridge and destroy it, thereby trapping the garrison and taking it into captivity.

The Allies took possession of the port's dockyards on 10 September. The bloody siege of Sevastopol had lasted 349 days. The overall cost of the operation to the Allies was 128,000 men, who died from combat or from disease, while the cost to the Russians was 100,000. The Crimean War dragged on for another six months. The Russians, who lost the war, agreed to the Allies' terms as set forth in the Treaty of Paris that was signed in March 1856. Those terms forbade them from possessing Black Sea fleet; however, after the Prussians defeated the French in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, Tsar Alexander II built a new Black Sea fleet.

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"NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE"

WORDS TOM GARNER

INTERVIEW WITH WWII GLIDER PILOT RON JOHNSON

This former British Army officer describes how he survived being seriously wounded at the Battle of Arnhem, before successfully escaping German captivity

A Handley Page Halifax tows a Horsa glider from a British airfield in 1944

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***Above:** Allied paratroopers drop into the Netherlands on the first day of Operation Market Garden, 17 September 1944*

© Getty

Four British paratroopers move through a shell-damaged house in Oosterbeek, 23 September 1944

Operation Market Garden was the daring Allied airborne attempt to liberate the Netherlands, cross the River Rhine and advance into Germany. An extremely ambitious plan, the operation infamously failed to achieve its objectives in September 1944, with German armoured forces inflicting heavy casualties on lightly armed Allied troops.

Defined by the determination of the beleaguered airborne forces, Market Garden was characterised by huge numbers of soldiers being transported by air in both powered aircraft and gliders. The latter were extremely vulnerable aircraft, piloted by thousands of specially trained pilots. One of those unique airmen was Lieutenant Ron Johnson, a 23-year-old British officer from E Squadron, Glider Pilot Regiment.

Now 100 years old, Johnson still has vivid memories of fighting to liberate the Netherlands. He recalls flying over the North Sea among hundreds of aircraft, fighting in terrible conditions near Arnhem, successfully escaping from Germany as a POW and finally celebrating VE Day in London. Johnson is living proof of the wartime generation's courage and his story reflects his regiment's optimistic motto – "Nothing is Impossible".

"A terrible mess"

Born in October 1921, Johnson grew up in the 1930s with an unsettling awareness that war was on the horizon: "When I was 17 the Oxford Union debated whether the young men of Britain would fight for 'King and Country'. The Union concluded that they would not fight but a number of us thought: 'If Hitler really believes we won't fight then we're going to be in a terrible mess.' A lot of us then joined the Territorial Army for that reason."

Johnson volunteered as a reservist and initially served in the Essex Regiment during the early years of WWII. "I was called up three days before the war started," he says. "At that stage I didn't have a uniform, boots, rifle or anything – I was just in my plain clothes. When I was with the Essex Regiment they put us on [anti-aircraft] searchlights. There was some activity when I fired a machine gun at low-flying aircraft and things like that but I didn't really see combat."

Johnson wanted to join the RAF but when he became an officer in September 1943 his priorities were diverted. "As soon as I was commissioned they asked for volunteers for the Glider Pilot Regiment," he says. "Because I'd passed the RAF selection board I initially didn't want to do it and waited to go in the air force. However, the opportunity never came and when they urgently needed glider pilots I thought: 'If they need us, I'll go.'"

Assigned to E Squadron in the Glider Pilot Regiment, Johnson trained on various aircraft before he graduated onto the Airspeed Horsa troop-carrying glider. "You first of all trained on powered aircraft and then the Hotspur light glider, which could take 12 people," he explains. "I then trained on the Horsa, which could take 28 fully armed troops or a Jeep and

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six-pounder gun. Others were trained on the big Hamilcar glider that could carry a couple of Bren gun carriers, a light tank or 17-pounder gun.”

By mid-1944, Johnson was a fully trained glider pilot but he had to wait to before he went on his first combat flight: “I was expecting to fly on D-Day but I was in reserve and one of the very few that didn’t go. There were also lots of planned glider operations after D-Day but they were all cancelled. This meant that Market Garden was my first operation.”

“An amazing sight”

Commencing on 17 September 1944, the ‘Market’ element of Operation Market Garden was the largest airborne operation in history, consisting of the US 82nd and 101st US Airborne Divisions, British 1st Airborne Division and the Polish 1st Independent Parachute Brigade.

34,600 Allied personnel were to be transported into the Netherlands by air. 20,011 would land by parachute while 14,589 would be taken in gliders. The gliders would also transport large numbers of vehicles, artillery pieces, ammunition and other equipment. The majority of the gliders were 2,160 American CG-4A Wacos, while the rest were almost 1,000 British Horsas and Hamilcars.

916 Horsas were used during Market Garden, with each aircraft being piloted by a ‘first pilot’ and a co-pilot. Johnson was a co-pilot but commanded other airmen: “There were 12 glider pilots in my section, including myself. I was a lieutenant and flew as a co-pilot while the first pilot was a sergeant. He was in command in the air but as soon as we touched down I was the officer in command.”

Johnson’s section of E Squadron flew to the Netherlands on 18 September 1944, the day after Operation Market Garden began. Towed by a C-47 Dakota, his glider was filled with men and equipment: “We had a Jeep, two trailers, welding equipment for the division, four REME (Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers) personnel and a fold-up bicycle.

“We took off from Down Ampney, Gloucestershire, and flew over the Suffolk coast and then the North Sea. There were two streams of aircraft with tugs and gliders as far as the eye could see. I think that stretch of aircraft going across the North Sea was possibly 100 miles long. It was an amazing sight that I’ll never forget.”

The huge numbers of gliders and powered aircraft was impressive but there were also signs of how hazardous the flight was: “As we went across we looked down and there were two gliders that’d had a mishap and crashed into the sea. It was dangerous but the crew managed to get out.”

“A very serious battle”

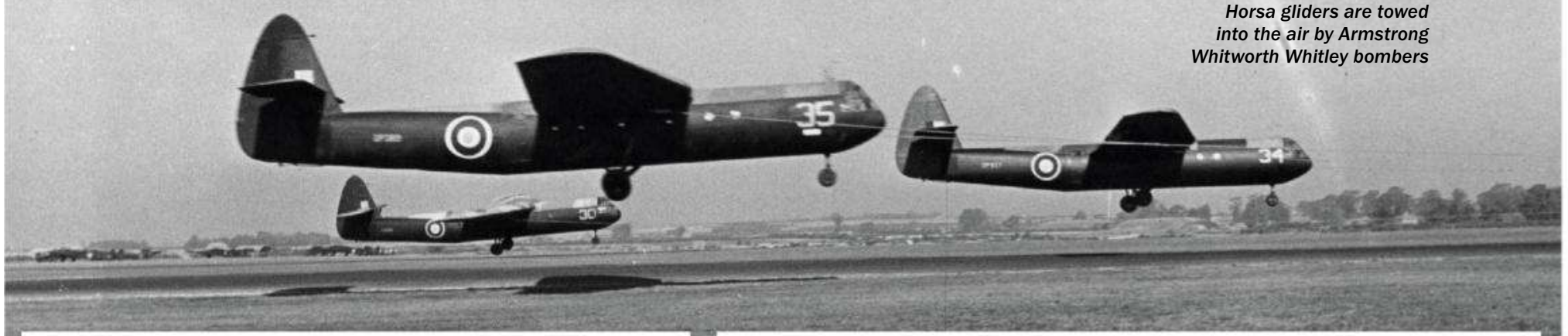
Once Johnson’s Horsa was flying over the Netherlands he had to safely land the glider at the designated landing zone near Wolfheze, a village almost six miles west of Arnhem. “You could never be sure that you would reach your landing zone and our turning point [to

AIRSPEED HORSA

This wooden glider was the defenceless but trusty workhorse of Britain’s airborne operations during World War II

Manufactured by the British company Airspeed Limited, the Horsa was named after a legendary Anglo-Saxon warrior who reputedly conquered southern Britain in the 5th century. Introduced in 1941, the Horsa was built in large numbers to air-land troops, weapons and equipment behind enemy lines. This meant that soldiers would be less scattered than paratroopers and could rapidly become effective fighting units. Primarily made of wood, the Horsa Mk I was an unarmed, one-use glider with equipment being unloaded through its removable tail. Towed by various aircraft, it had a top tow speed of 150mph and could glide at 100mph with a maximum weight of 15,500lb.

Almost 3,800 Horsas were built during WWII and they were extensively used on D-Day as well as on Operations Dragoon, Market Garden and Varsity. Despite being defensively weak, Johnson highly regards the glider: “I thought it was a very good aircraft and nearly all glider pilots thought the same. It was mainly made in furniture factories and was good to fly, good to land and very suitable. There were usually two pilots but if you were doing a long trip like ferrying to North Africa they would use three pilots. It was also very, very vulnerable if you were flying low through anti-aircraft guns and Me 109s could easily shoot you down.”



Horsa gliders are towed into the air by Armstrong Whitworth Whitley bombers

British paratroopers pictured inside a Horsa glider during the invasion of Sicily, July 1943

American paratroopers watch a British Horsa glider fly in reinforcements at Wesel, Germany, to secure the Rhine crossing, 24 March 1945

Images © Getty

land] was ‘s-Hertogenbosch,” he says. “When we turned I was quite sure we were going to make it. This was because the turning point was a short distance from the landing field and we came in at about 2,500 feet.”

The Horsa landed safely and was immediately dismantled: “We could clearly see the landing field and in fact it was just like an exercise. We landed exactly where we were supposed to and got our Jeep and trailers out. To do that we had to take the tail off the Horsa with the REME men helping us. That went well but Horsa Mk Is’ were one-use gliders so it was then abandoned. Later gliders, such as the Horsa Mk II, could swivel so you could drive out of the nose. They could be reused but at Arnhem we didn’t have those.”

Johnson initially thought his mission was complete but Market Garden’s plan was already disintegrating. The Rhine crossing at Arnhem had been reached by British paratroopers but the Allied advance was hindered further back by narrow roads, communication problems and the unexpected presence of German tanks.

“I THINK THAT STRETCH OF AIRCRAFT GOING ACROSS THE NORTH SEA WAS POSSIBLY 100 MILES LONG. IT WAS AN AMAZING SIGHT THAT I’LL NEVER FORGET”

Without the swift arrival of ground forces, the lightly armed airborne troops would struggle to hold back German armoured units. The deteriorating situation on the ground soon became apparent to Johnson: “At that stage our normal job would have been to get back as far as possible to do another glider landing but we couldn’t get back. We didn’t expect to be involved but it turned out that Arnhem was a very serious battle.”

Johnson’s section moved to an area northeast of Wolfheze and joined up with the rest of E Squadron. They soon came under attack: “We dug trenches and on the Tuesday morning (19 September) one of the first things that happened was that we were shot up by an Me 109. It came over and strafed us and I understand two glider pilots were killed.”

Shortly after the Messerschmitt attack, Johnson watched an RAF Dakota burn as it tried to fly in supplies: “The aircraft was on fire but the pilot flew right around again because he hadn’t dropped all his supplies. Seeing this pilot fly around on fire but still dropping his supplies made me say to my men: ‘If he can do this for us up there, we’ve got to put our backs into it down here.’ I can remember saying that as clear as yesterday.”

The Dakota crashed and killed all but one of its crewmembers. Johnson didn’t discover until after the war that he personally knew the brave pilot: “It was Flight Lieutenant David Lord, who was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

The view from the cockpit of a Horsa glider

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Airborne Royal Artillerymen unload a Jeep and trailer from their Horsa glider at Wolfheze, 17 September 1944. Johnson landed here the following day

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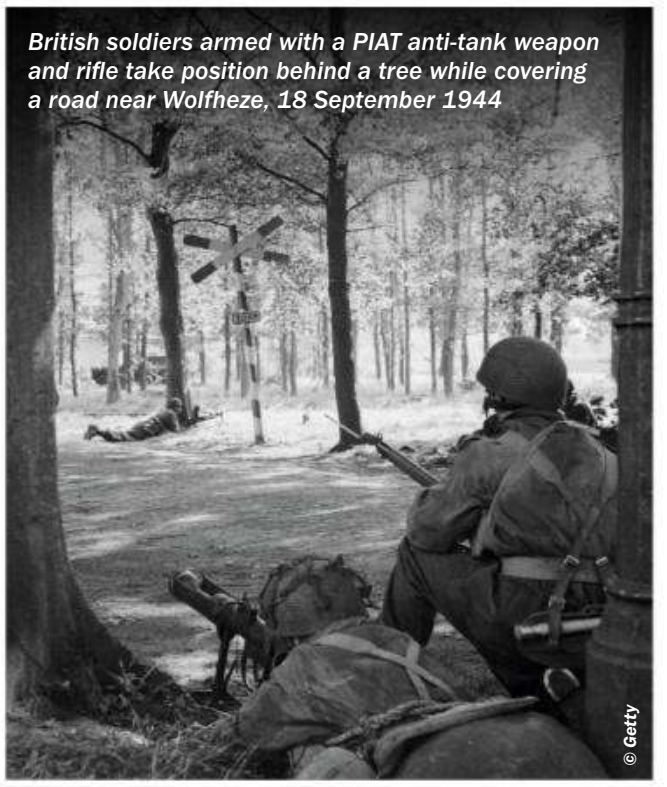
German soldiers run between buildings during the fighting at Oosterbeek



British soldiers armed with a PIAT anti-tank weapon and rifle take position behind a tree while covering a road near Wolfheze, 18 September 1944

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British prisoners help a wounded comrade after being captured

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British paratroopers take cover in a shell hole at Oosterbeek

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He was actually from my mess at Down Ampney so I knew him. He was older than the majority of us and already had the DFC from previous operations so we looked up to him. Lord was a very nice man and never swore. He would say ‘lummee’ in place of a swear word so he had the nickname ‘Lummee Lord’.”

“Complete mayhem”

During the night of 19-20 September, E Squadron moved from Wolfheze to the Dreyeroord Hotel in the village of Oosterbeek. Located three miles west of Arnhem and situated on the north bank of the Rhine, Oosterbeek was used as a temporary headquarters by Major General Roy Urquhart, the commander of 1st Airborne Division. Urquhart attempted to direct operations from the Hartenstein Hotel but, like the British paratroopers at Arnhem Bridge, the Allied soldiers at Oosterbeek found themselves increasingly cut off and surrounded.

Desperate fighting broke out at various places in Oosterbeek, including the Dreyeroord Hotel. Informally known as the ‘White House’, the hotel became a bitterly contested defensive position for the British, including Johnson and his men: “We went into the grounds of the White House and were there with the King’s Own Scottish Borderers. We dug trenches in the surrounding grounds with people also in the house itself.”

Johnson fought at this position for days in a battle that he describes as “complete mayhem”. While he was in the trenches he had a direct encounter with an enemy vehicle: “I was in the end of my section’s position when a German half-track suddenly came along. Its commander was standing up because he was the eyes and ears of the driver. Without thinking too much about it I took out my revolver and shot him, which killed this poor fellow. The people inside the half-track were lost without him so they tried to get out and escape. There were two others inside and they were killed by men from the Scottish Borderers.”

After this incident, Johnson continued fighting as the nearby buildings were steadily destroyed. Meanwhile, trapped civilians attempted to reach safety: “On the Wednesday night, the house opposite us was burning and the fire lit up the night sky. A young lady came out of the house and called across in English: ‘I’m Dutch, may I come across please?’ As the nearest officer I shouted at the top of my voice to nearby troops: ‘Stop firing, stop firing!’ I didn’t know what effect this would have but I was trying to get the other soldiers’ attention. I then called across to this young woman: ‘Yes, come across now!’ She got halfway across the road when a machine gunner opened up and shot her down.”

The machine gunner had shot the woman in the foot, which prompted Johnson to attempt a rescue: “Having given her permission to come across, I had to do something about it. I said to Sergeant Des Page, who was next to me: ‘Look after things here, Des’ before I went out and picked up the woman. I brought her back to our positions and handed her over to Des, who gave her morphine and took her to a dressing station. She was alive and we know she survived but we were never able to trace her after the war.”

By Thursday 21 September, E Squadron were trying to move from their position but they were pinned down by German snipers firing from upstairs rooms in nearby houses. Johnson used a portable anti-tank weapon known as a 'PIAT' to remove the threat: "There was a house opposite where a sniper was creating terrible damage to us. I took the PIAT, crept across so that I was close enough and put a PIAT bomb into the house. We didn't get any more sniping from him after that and we stopped losing people."

Johnson's manoeuvre was successful but using the PIAT diminished his men's already low amounts of ammunition: "When someone is firing down at you from a house and killing people you want to get rid of him. However, it was a waste of a bomb in one sense because it should have been used to stop a tank or something. Nevertheless, to stop the killing was a sensible thing to do – and it worked."

The fighting at Wolfheze and Oosterbeek was Johnson's first real experience of combat but, despite the extreme danger he was in, his primary feeling was to set a good example: "The strangest thing is that my main feeling was not fear. I can't speak for other officers but the only thing in my head was: 'I hope and pray I don't let myself down in front of my soldiers.' I was in front of my NCOs – sergeants and staff sergeants – and luckily I know that I didn't."

Multiple wounds

Shortly after the incident with the sniper, Johnson was wounded in the head by a mortar bomb that also killed two British soldiers: "If the bomb had landed on top of my trench it would have obviously killed me and unfortunately it did kill those two men from the Scottish Borderers. I got away with just superficial damage – that's how close it was."

Johnson made his way to a dressing station but his troubles weren't over: "They spent about an hour picking stuff out of my head and mopping up the blood. I was put in bandages that left just my eyes and mouth free but I returned to my trench. I was probably in a bit of shock from the wound and was somehow thinking: 'I'd better check those two men who had been where the mortar bomb had landed.' They had of course been killed but (and I don't know why I did this) I got out of my trench to see them and as I got out a sniper put a bullet through my back."

The sniper's bullet came through Johnson's shoulder and he once again needed immediate medical attention: "I was back in the dressing station only ten minutes after the first time and the medics said: 'Oh no, not you again – we've just spent an hour on you!'

"After I was wounded the second time, the medics said: 'You're finished now' and I was taken away in a Jeep to the Hartenstein Hotel, which is now a museum. When I got there, a young doctor called Lieutenant Randall treated my wounds. He told me that I wasn't going back into action and I was taken to the Hotel Tafelberg, which had been turned into a temporary hospital."

The Tafelberg was located at Oosterbeek's central crossroads and became increasingly filled with severely wounded Allied soldiers: "During the first night at the Tafelberg I had a bed to sleep in but I had to give it up on

GLIDER PILOT REGIMENT

British 1st Airborne Division's unique glider unit had a brief regimental history but won many battle honours

Formed on 21 December 1941, the Glider Pilot Regiment provided the crews for the British Army's military gliders. It was created in response to successful German airborne operations during the Battle of France and was organised into two 'Wings'. Each Wing contained seven squadrons and corresponded to a lightly armed infantry battalion.

The regiment's pilots were army personnel who had hoped to join the RAF. A shortage of places in the air force meant that these men volunteered to be glider pilots so that they could still have an opportunity to fly. It was known as an 'NCO Regiment' because the lowest rank was sergeant while squadron and flight commanders were majors, lieutenants and captains. Pilots primarily flew Airspeed Horsas, although other gliders were used such as the GAL.48 Hotspur, GAL.49 Hamilcar and WACO CG-4 Hadrian.

The regiment first saw action during Operation Freshman in November 1942 and it received nine WWII battle honours. This included the invasion of Sicily, Normandy landings, Pegasus Bridge, Arnhem and crossing the River Rhine. It also participated in post-war operations such as the Berlin Aircraft and Operation Firedog in Malaya before it was amalgamated into the current Army Air Corps in 1957.

Pilots from the regiment pose in front of a Horsa glider, 11 December 1944

Image: Wiki / PD / Gov

***Right:** E Squadron, Glider Pilot Regiment pictured in front of a glider, c.1947. Ron Johnson is in the front row, fourth from right*

Image: Ron Johnson

“NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE”

Ron Johnson spent most of his time as a POW at Spangenberg Castle, a medieval fortress in the Hessian county of Schwalm-Eder-Kreis

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Johnson pictured meeting children outside the ‘White House’ at Oosterbeek where he fought in September 1944

Images: Ron Johnson

Johnson with Queen Elizabeth II

Johnson meets Prince Charles, the colonel-in-chief of Britain’s Army Air Corps

© Getty

the second night to someone who was worse than I was. I instead had a place on the floor but I then had to give up the floor on the third night and ended up on the stairs! I was feeling sorry for myself by then with my head all in bandages, arm in a sling and a step on the stairs to sleep on. However, other people were a lot more wounded than I was.”

The Allied defensive pocket at Oosterbeek shrank until the wounded were captured: “The Germans overran the Tafelberg and we were taken away in trucks on the Sunday (24 September) up to Apeldoorn. When they evacuated us I could see how seriously we were in trouble because the dead bodies were piled up high. That was an unpleasant sight to see.”

A “dejecting” captivity

Operation Market Garden was over by 25 September 1944. It had resulted in an Allied advance of 60 miles into the occupied Netherlands with the cities of Eindhoven, Nijmegen and many Dutch towns being liberated. However, despite the extreme bravery of Allied forces the Battle of Arnhem had been a disaster, with 1st Airborne Division losing much of its strength and the Germans holding on to the vital crossing over the Rhine.

For the recently captured and badly wounded Johnson, the defeat was both demoralising and the beginning of a grim captivity: “It felt very, very dejecting and it was even more dejecting when the Germans moved us away in cattle trucks, which was against the Geneva Convention. I found out afterwards that the Red Cross told the Germans: ‘Don’t do that again, it defies the convention that you’ve signed up to.’”

“DEFEAT FELT VERY, VERY DEJECTING AND IT WAS EVEN MORE DEJECTING WHEN THE GERMANS MOVED US AWAY IN CATTLE TRUCKS”

Although he was suffering serious injuries, Johnson spent days locked inside a cattle truck: “The Germans only took one load of trucks and we were locked in there for four days and three nights. It was the worst experience of my life by a long way. We were heavily wounded and there was a major in our cattle truck who died of head wounds. It was a very low point.”

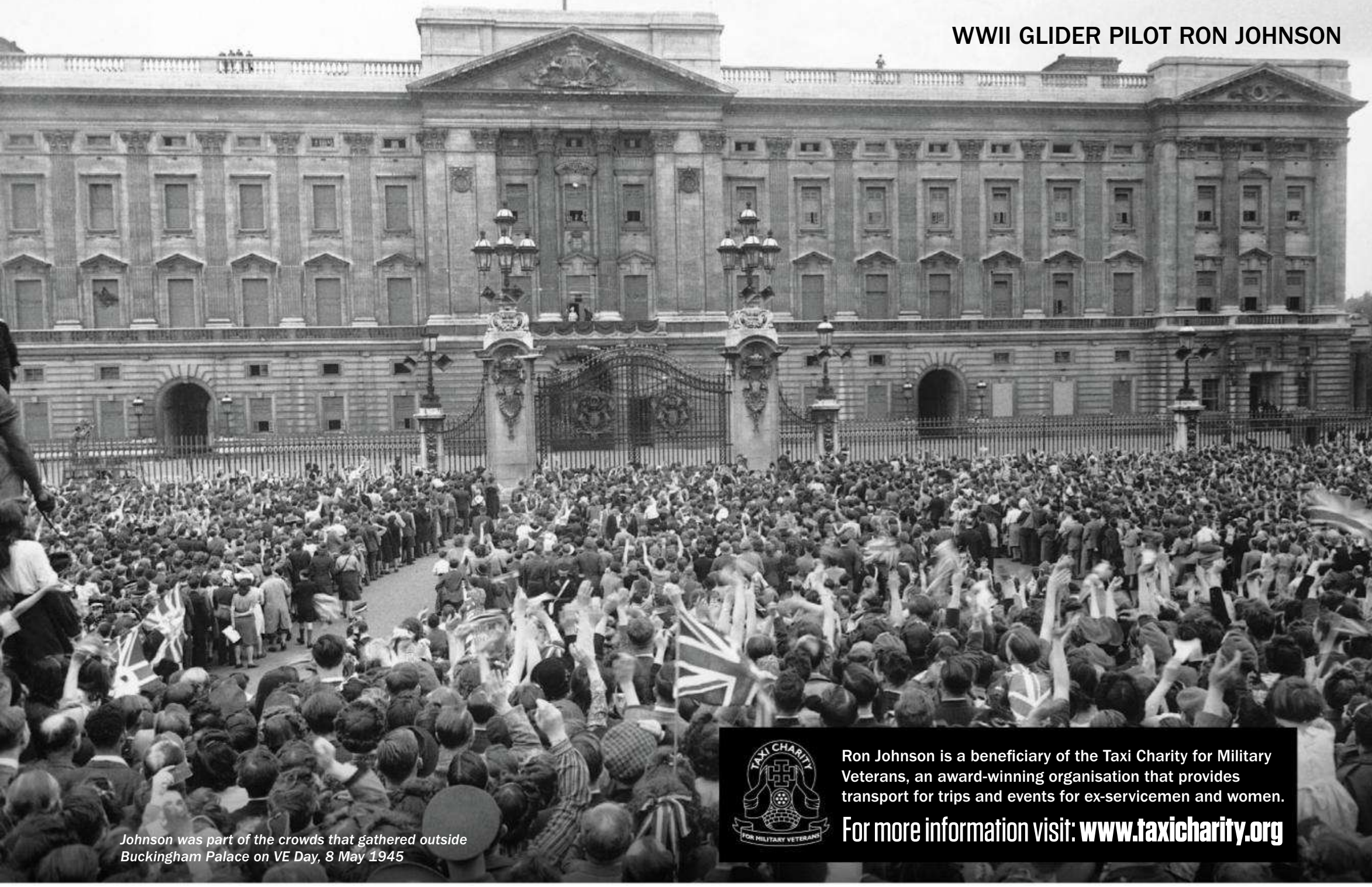
The situation became even bleaker when the prisoners were transferred to a POW camp inside Germany: “They took us to Fallingbostel, which was just north of Bergen-Belsen. When I was there we heard that there was a camp just south of us but we didn’t know it was Belsen. We heard it was primarily a camp for Russians and that they were dying in great numbers from typhus. That proved to be true afterwards – it was a terrible thing.”

After a while, Johnson and five other glider pilots were transported under armed escort on a train to Spangenberg Castle in Hesse. Designated as ‘Oflag IX-A’, Spangenberg was a medieval fortress that imprisoned Allied POWs. Johnson recalls that conditions were a slight improvement on his previous experiences: “It was very similar to Colditz but you were quite reasonably treated. However, you were hungry the whole time. In fact, although we were very young soldiers and officers, the main thing we talked about was not women but food!”

Escape to victory

Johnson remained in Spangenberg for months until April 1945 when the Germans moved the prisoners east by train to avoid them being liberated by the advancing Allies. At one point, the POWs’ train halted by a railway embankment near the town of Eschwege, where some of the prisoners decided to escape: “A little paratrooper lieutenant called Johnny Sutton and a glider pilot officer called Briscoe were with us and said: ‘We’re going.’ I said: ‘What do you mean?’ and they said: ‘We’re going to escape’ before they rolled down the embankment. Briscoe got away but Johnny Sutton fractured his ankle and was subsequently recaptured.”

The prisoners were moved to a barn but Briscoe and Sutton’s escape attempt inspired Johnson and another glider pilot to make their own bid for freedom: “Bob Garnett and I decided that we’d had enough because the Germans were moving us gradually east towards the Russians. We decided to escape so we got away from that barn at night. We went up into the hills and hid in a bush.”



Johnson was part of the crowds that gathered outside Buckingham Palace on VE Day, 8 May 1945

Ron Johnson is a beneficiary of the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans, an award-winning organisation that provides transport for trips and events for ex-servicemen and women.

For more information visit: **www.taxicharity.org**

Exposed to the elements and deep inside enemy territory, Johnson and Garnett were in great danger: “We had a few biscuits and got some water from a cart track that we scooped into our mess tins. It was always possible that we could be shot. What you hoped was that you didn’t meet any Germans, either deserters or fighting troops. Fortunately we didn’t, although we were still wearing our battle dress.”

The two pilots hid in the bush for over a week before they finally encountered Allied soldiers: “We stayed in hiding for eight days and seven nights until we saw an organised American advance coming along. We then ran down the hill to the bottom and found some Americans. It was wonderful to be free and the Americans put us in a house where they fed and looked after us. We slept there for one night but on the following morning they said: ‘You’re on your own now, we’ve got a battle to fight.’”

Johnson and Garnett hitched a lift on a French foreign workers lorry to an airfield near Eschwege, where they were flown to Paris. The pilots were lodged in a Parisian hotel for one night but Johnson struggled to relax: “Bob slept very well but for some reason I wasn’t able to sleep. I asked the doctor there: ‘Please, put me to sleep.’ He gave me an injection and the next morning they had a job waking me up because the injection had worked too well!”

Having successfully escaped captivity, Johnson was flown back to England from France. He was at home with his parents on 8 May 1945 when VE Day was declared and travelled to London to celebrate: “I got dressed up and was feeling very happy with myself. I took the train to Charing Cross, had a meal there and went to a news theatre, which we had instead of TV in those days.”

Johnson then participated in an iconic celebration: “I went to Buckingham Palace where all the crowds were gathering and was there on VE night. I saw the king, queen and Winston Churchill (which was impressive to see) before joining up with two other lieutenants. We spent the evening together and met up with three girls who had come down from Scotland. Two of them paired off and I stayed with the girl that was left and we went to a pub in Shepherd Market. It was great that I had managed to be in England on VE Day.”

“The right thing to try”

Johnson had endured a grim experience in the Netherlands and as a prisoner but he respected the fighting qualities of German troops: “I generally regarded them as good, disciplined soldiers. It was only the SS who were what I call ‘bastards’, which they were. They were proper Nazis and ruthless killers but most German soldiers were like British soldiers really.”

Operation Market Garden was the last time that the Germans inflicted a major defeat on the Allies but Johnson believes that its outcome was not inevitable and could have had a positive impact on history: “I certainly think it could have succeeded and I’ve personally always thought it was the right thing to try. The fact that it didn’t come off was unfortunate but if it had worked it would have saved millions of lives. There’s no question about that and it would have saved a lot of German lives as well. The Germans were actually unfortunate that they won at Arnhem. If we had got through and the Americans had reached Berlin before the Russians, then the Germans would not have suffered as much as they did. The Dutch would have been more fortunate too because many starved during the winter of 1944-45.”

Johnson remained in the British Army until 1952, when he left with the rank of captain. He went on to have a successful business career and reached his 100th birthday in October 2021. When he looks back on his wartime experiences, he remains astonished at his survival: “I think I was very lucky to get away with it having been both mortar-bombed and shot in the back. The last wound created a big hole but I’ve managed to have a successful life since so I feel very fortunate.”

The Battle of Arnhem may have been a disastrous defeat but the Dutch have never forgotten the Allies’ determination to liberate them. In the decades since the war, Johnson has revisited the Netherlands many times, and he and his fellow veterans are always given the warmest welcome: “The Dutch treat us tremendously whenever we go, particularly in Oosterbeek where pretty much every house has a British flag in their garden when you visit. The young Dutch people are always coming up to meet me. When you visit wearing your medals, blazer and red beret they see you as a hero.”

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Triquet was, in many respects, a representative of his unit's heroics. One regimental account even referred to his company winning the VC for their commander

"WHEN THE ENEMY COUNTER-ATTACKED HE AGAIN TOOK COMMAND OF THE SITUATION AND GATHERED THE REMNANTS OF THE TROOPS, ORGANISING THEM SUCCESSFULLY IN A DEFENSIVE LINE. AT ALL TIMES HIS CHEERFULNESS AND PERSONAL DISREGARD FOR DANGER WERE APPARENT"

Major 'Snuffy' Smith

Image: Wiki / PD / Gov

Heroes of the Victoria Cross

PAUL TRIQUET

With the Allied advance on Rome slowing significantly, a French-Canadian officer inspired courage and fortitude in his men who, pinned down in a farmhouse near Ortona, faced repeated enemy attacks

WORDS **ALEX BOWERS**

Paul Triquet glanced at the weapon he'd just taken from an enemy prisoner. The young German officer, shaken to his core, had appeared all too willing to relinquish his Walther P38 pistol in return for escaping the incessant Allied bombardment. The artillery had opened fire at 06:00 on 14 December, 1943, but now it was the turn of the Canadian 1st Division's Royal 22e Régiment (the 'Van Doos'), including Triquet's C Company, to begin advancing on the staunchly defended positions ahead. Though the initial surrender of a small contingent of forces had instilled new confidence into the Quebeckers, the day was only just beginning.

It wouldn't be the first time Triquet would have to prove himself, nor would it be the last. As a child during the 1918 influenza pandemic, the then eight-year-old from Cabano, Quebec, had served as a messenger between the community doctor and priest while transporting food supplies from the stores that were still open. In 1925, wanting to walk in his war veteran father's footsteps, he'd attempted to enlist in the army, only to be told that at 15 he was too young. He eventually succeeded in 1927, albeit after lying about his age and declaring he was 19. The next few years saw Triquet rise through the ranks at impressive speed, all the while navigating the seldom compromising, predominantly anglophone environment of Canadian military life. His personal life, on the other hand, suffered greatly. When Canada declared war on Germany, he'd legally separated from his wife and was apart from his two children.

The Van Doos had departed for Britain two months later, although the subsequent training turned out more complicated than expected. This was primarily due to the unit's language barrier that, in a country increasingly paranoid about spies and espionage, elicited unwarranted suspicion among many locals. There was at least one incident of a Quebecker, deputy commanding officer Major PE Poirier, being arrested by authorities for his accent. In the meantime, a waiting game commenced. It was not until April 1943 that space was made in the British Eighth Army for the Canadian 1st Division, by which point the men were more than keen to showcase their fighting prowess. Their chance came in Sicily, where Triquet, eventually reaching the rank of captain and then acting major of C Company, was able to earn the long-overdue respect of his English-speaking counterparts.

The Italian mainland was the Allies' next goal and, for the Van Doos, the greatest test yet. Despite Mussolini having been ousted and Italy capitulating within days of the invasion, the Germans remained entrenched across the peninsula. Hitler, it seemed, was ready to fight for every inch of ground, a fight that only increased in ferocity the further north the Allied armies trudged. The reason was relatively simple: they'd reached the terrain near the Moro River, a position the enemy was determined to hold. Beyond it lay the soon-to-

© Getty

While Triquet unquestionably loved his family, the Canadian media was quick to portray him as a dutiful husband and father despite being separated from his wife

be infamous town of Ortona. Before it could fall, however, it was up to Triquet's C Company to clear a vital part of the route.

With his newly captured sidearm pocketed, Triquet urged the men forward towards their objectives: first the Italian farmhouse known as Casa Berardi and then, assuming all went well, the crossroads from Ortona to Orsogna. They were expected to be accompanied by D Company, which was approaching from the south of what had been dubbed, somewhat ominously, 'the gully', along with seven Ontario Regiment Sherman tanks. In front of them was the highway and some large houses, deadly silent and devoid of movement. Then, as C Company edged ever closer, the deep and unmistakable roar of a revving engine shattered the stillness as the low snout of a Panzer IV emerged. The battle erupted but there was no sign of the Canadian armoured support, which was still well behind as it crossed slowly through thick mud, nor D Company, which was engaged elsewhere. They were alone.

Triquet called up a PIAT group to take out the tank, only for the weapon to malfunction. Thankfully, a functioning one was eventually obtained and destroyed the Panzer. By now the battle was in full swing, stopping only briefly to allow an Italian woman and her two children to run towards the Canadian line before bullets tore through the air once again. With casualties mounting, the Germans on the flanks and Casa Berardi still a mile away, Triquet attempted to encourage the unit by muttering a phrase that would serve as a resounding call to action: "We are surrounded, the enemy is in front, behind and at our sides – the safest place is the objective." The push was helped by the Shermans that had at last crossed through the mud as the enemy

"MAJOR TRIQUET DID A WONDERFUL JOB. HE DID NOT THINK OF HIS OWN LIFE BUT, IN SPITE OF THE FIRE, WAS EVERYWHERE TELLING US WHAT TO DO AND CHEERING US UP. HIS BRAVERY WAS A WONDERFUL EXAMPLE TO US ALL AND ENCOURAGED US TO FIGHT ON. I DO NOT THINK WE COULD HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT HIM"

Lance Corporal JR Ducharme

retreated. C Company attained the position at around 15:00, but at a terrible cost.

Of the 81 Quebeckers who had started the day under Triquet's command, only 14 remained as dusk fell. Three of the seven Shermans were out of action, while ammunition, water and food were running perilously low. The Germans, who remained close by, hurled insults and invitations to surrender between exchanges of fire until, finally, B Company appeared out of the growing darkness. Dusk turned to night, but it wasn't until 03:00 the morning of 15 December that the elusive D Company showed up, announced by the familiar voice of Triquet's close comrade Major Ovila Garceau. Triquet later recalled that "never in my life would I feel an emotion as strong as the one I felt hearing in the dark the voice of my best friend… bringing reinforcements to our small, exhausted group". The support would be sorely needed for the bloody days ahead.

About three hours later, the Van Doos attempted to take their second objective of the crossroads, with little success and more heavy casualties. They returned to the house and received new orders: hold their position for 48 more hours. Unable to evacuate the wounded, the regiment turned parts of Casa Berardi into a first aid station. Meanwhile, Triquet spent the rest of the day jumping from shell hole to shell hole, constantly under fire, checking in on his men and joking that the Germans "don't know how to shoot". He later said of the experience: "In the state of mind I was [in], seeing all those dead bodies strewn over the area, and being unable to bury them, I had to, in order to hang in there, be able to speak with the few survivors that remained." His cheerfulness, resilience and personal disregard for danger didn't go unnoticed. Indeed, they inspired those around him, a boost to morale that only increased when, the following day, word was received that Triquet had secured his promotion as major.

During the third night, 16-17 December, Major Triquet pulled out his Walther P38 and held it in his hands, its weight heavy in his sleep-deprived state. But his weary eyes soon faltered, his grip loosened and,

© Getty

The capture of Casa Berardi was a crucial step on the road to liberating Ortona

This statue at the Valiants Memorial is just one of the monuments dedicated to Triquet – plaques are located in Quebec City, Montreal, Calgary and Casa Berardi itself

before he could fully comprehend what had happened, the weapon discharged. Having narrowly missed a fellow soldier, it was determined that he should get some rest. The day passed with further artillery bombardments. Another advance to the crossroads followed on 18 December which, despite even greater losses, was achieved in full on 19 December. Just nine of Triquet's C Company remained in action by that point, all of whom, alongside their fallen comrades, deserved recognition for their outstanding service. There needed to be a representative for that honour, though – an honour that was to be pinned upon the breast pocket of Major Paul Triquet, VC.

His citation read in part: "Against the most bitter and determined defence and under heavy fire… [Major] Triquet showed the most magnificent courage… and tireless devotion to duty." Yet his duty wasn't over – in the spring and summer of 1944 he became one of Canada's most recognisable heroes of the war effort. Being the first VC recipient who was available for public relations, he was promptly thrust into the limelight to highlight the nation's contribution and, due to his francophone background, encourage further French-Canadian enlistment. It turned out to be a role that was ill-suited to him.

Triquet, already suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, grew increasingly disillusioned with the media's portrayal of his bravery. As well as placing words in his mouth that he had never said, and erasing the role that his men had played, the media also made him out to be a family man, something he knew not to be true. He developed a tendency to lose his temper and started drinking excessively, traits that contributed to his temporarily leaving military life in 1947. Years later, after overcoming some of his struggles, he returned to the army and ultimately retired as a brigadier-general in 1960. He passed away in 1980, having never fully settled into his famous role, along with the expectations that came with it in the immediate post-war period. Nevertheless, his legacy and the story of his and his men's exploits live on through numerous memorials, perhaps the most noteworthy being a life-sized statue that stands in Ottawa as part of the Valiants Memorial in Confederation Square.

Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery (below) meets VC recipients (from left to right) Joseph Tombs, Colin Barron, Paul Triquet, Benjamin Geary and Henry Robson

EMPEROR OF THE NORTH

1,000 years ago, a young Viking warrior became king of England. No one at the time can have expected how remarkable his reign would be...

WORDS **WB BARTLETT**

Most famous now for his futile efforts to turn back the encroaching tide on the seashore, the life of Cnut was extraordinary. As well as being a strong, reliable supporter of the Church, he was also an archetypal Viking raider. Forming part of a dynamic marital alliance with his wife, Emma, he was also accused of the murder of his brother-in-law, Ulf. As well as ruling England and Denmark, he was for a short time king of Norway. His government of what has been called an 'Empire of the North' was a unique achievement, setting Cnut apart as a remarkable man and an outstanding ruler.

Cnut's roots were in Denmark. His great-grandfather, Gorm the Old, was the founder-figure of the Jelling Dynasty in Jutland. Gorm was a formidable pagan warrior, but his son, Harald Bluetooth, became an enthusiastic Christian ruler. Harald was involved in a bitter civil war with his own son, the renowned Sweyn Forkbeard, a conflict that ended with Harald fleeing the country and dying shortly afterwards in exile. Sweyn took over and won a reputation as a ruthless and ferocious Viking raider, frequently launching attacks on Britain, Ireland and elsewhere.

Cnut, the son of Sweyn Forkbeard, was probably born around 995, though no one knows for sure. The chronicles of the time are equally silent about the first 18 years of Cnut's life and it is not until 1013 that we find him first mentioned in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. But in that year he accompanied Sweyn on what was supposed to be the climactic campaign in the battle to conquer England. After several decades of raiding, increasing in scale all the time and often only ended by the payment of what later became known as Danegeld, Sweyn sensed that England was fatally wounded and, like a hungry predator, moved in for the kill.

EMPEROR OF THE NORTH

Cnut reigned as king of England from 1016 to 1035, also becoming king of Denmark and Norway. The son of a mighty Viking, his reign was one of peace and stability compared to what had gone before

He found support for his ambitions from the region of the Danelaw (around the East Midlands of modern England), and Northumbria also soon submitted to him. Moving into southern England, the defence against his forces quickly collapsed. The English king, Æthelred II ('the Unready') soon fled the country with his wife Emma and their children, Edward and Alfred. England, it seemed, had fallen. King Æthelred would later be painted as something of a pantomime villain, incompetent and cowardly in equal measure. It was a very harsh assessment given the enormous challenges that he had faced, but it could not be doubted that his reign had apparently ended in spectacular failure.

But just then, as if by a miracle, Sweyn died before he had been made king. Cnut was not with him at the time, having stayed in the Danelaw while Sweyn had moved into southern England. Shortly after, Cnut was badly caught out by a surprise attack on his camp launched by English forces. Æthelred returned from exile and Cnut, barely escaping with his life, fled to Denmark. Before departing, he left behind him a group of hostages minus their ears and noses. This was Cnut the Viking in action.

England's respite, though, was short-lived. In 1015, Cnut was back with 200 ships sailing via the 'mouth of the Frome' into Dorset. This saw the beginning of a brutal war for the control of England between Cnut and Edmund Ironside, the son of the now-dying King Æthelred. Both were very young warriors, in their early 20s, and the fighting that followed through several battles at Penselwood, Sherston and Otford was bloody and violent. Cnut also laid siege to London and it was a brutal contest that was fought out over a period of a year and more.

The last decisive battle took place at Ashingdon (or Assandun), Essex, in October 1016. It ended in a crushing victory for Cnut. Edmund survived the battle and a deal was struck that left him with Wessex but Cnut with the rest of England. The deal did not survive for long because on 30 November 1016 Edmund very conveniently died, leaving Cnut as the undisputed king of all England.

At the time, it was likely that the people of England were filled with trepidation at these developments. Given the ruthless nature of Viking raids on the country, there was a real

The Anglo-Danish warriors of Cnut's reign, shown wearing the traditional dress of the time

"BEFORE DEPARTING, HE LEFT BEHIND HIM A GROUP OF HOSTAGES MINUS THEIR EARS AND NOSES. THIS WAS CNUT THE VIKING IN ACTION"

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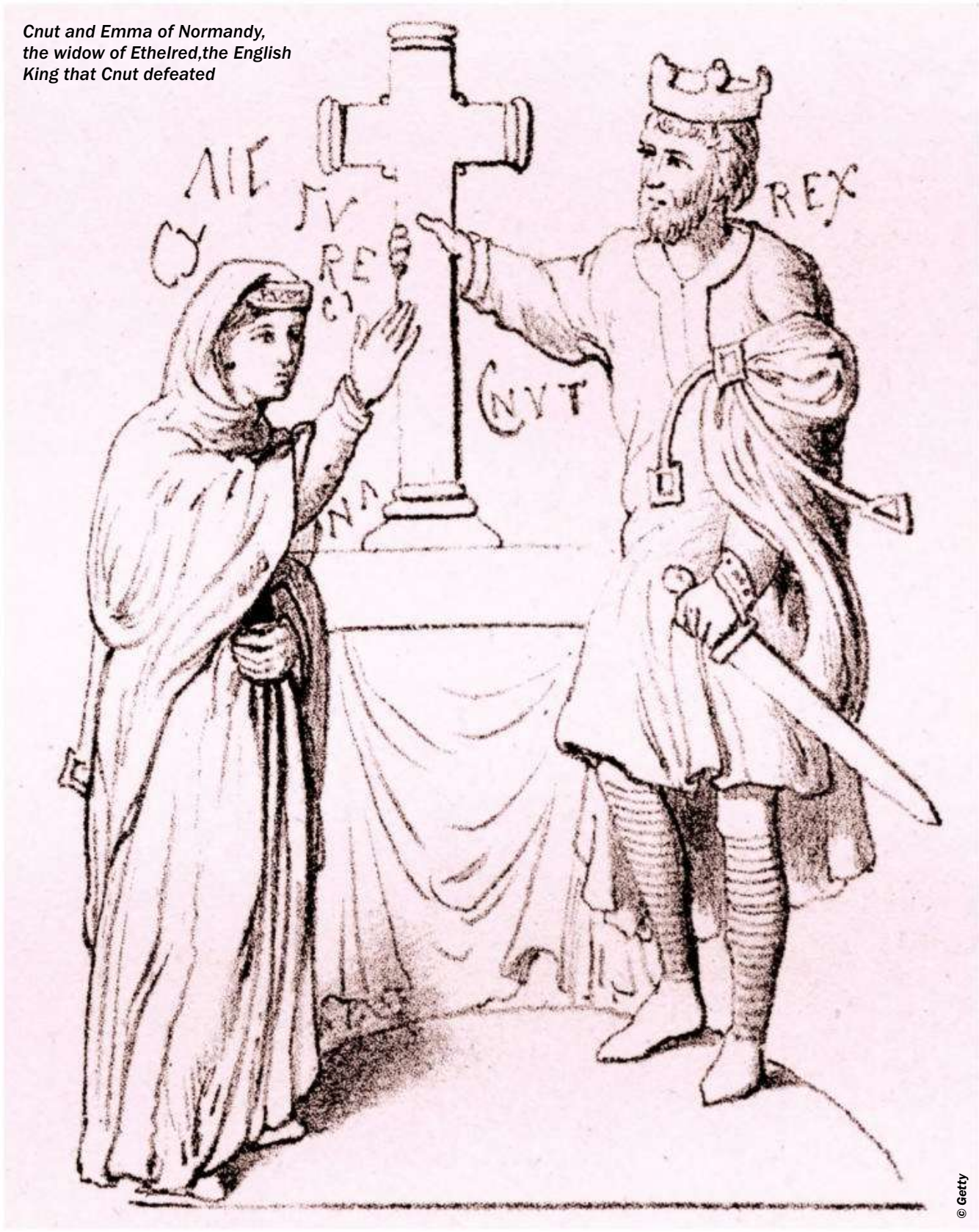
chance that the new king would milk England for all it was worth, and early signs did little to dispel that impression. Within a year, Cnut was ruthlessly removing those who he felt were plotting against him, including Eadric Streona, Earl of Mercia, whose treachery to the old regime had become a byword for duplicity and untrustworthiness.

In 1018 Cnut raised the highest Danegeld payment yet: £10,500 from London and £72,000 from the rest of England – massive amounts in the context of the times. But there was a sub-text to this move. Cnut's intention was to use the money to pay off Viking raiders that he no longer had a use for now that the war had been won. This would allow him to govern as he wanted to.

The first sign that there was something to this young man other than the attributes of a rip-roaring Viking raider occurred at around the same time. At a parliament at Oxford, Cnut adopted the laws of the late King Edgar, seen as one of the greatest of all English monarchs. Edgar's reign was perceived as a Golden Age, a time of peace and prosperity. This was a canny move by Cnut.

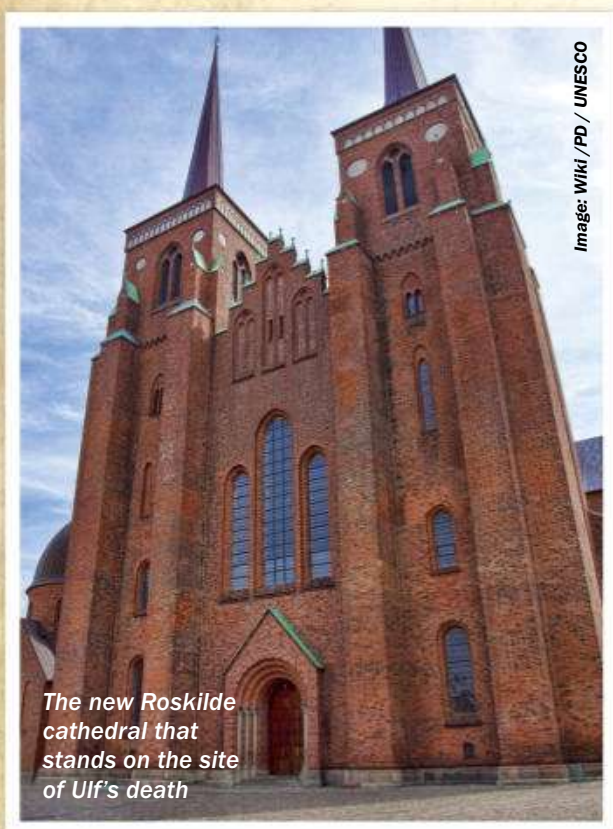
It followed another notable step when he married Emma, widow of the late King Æthelred. Emma had two children from her first marriage; Edward (later King Edward the Confessor) and Alfred. Cnut also had two children from a previous relationship with Ælfgifu of Northampton, named Sweyn and Harold (later Harold Harefoot, King of England). Soon after her marriage to Cnut Emma gave birth to another son, Harthacnut.

The death, soon after, of Cnut's childless elder brother, Harald, left Denmark open and Cnut soon installed himself as king there, seemingly with little opposition. Cnut, at around the same time, strengthened his hold on England by the judicious appointment of strong supporters in positions of authority in the country. Most prominent among these was Earl Godwin, who Cnut appointed as his representative in the crucial sub-kingdom of Wessex. Godwin would marry the sister of Cnut's brother-in-law. They would have a number of children, including Harold, who would himself become King of England and die, allegedly, with an arrow in his eye, at the Battle of Hastings in 1066.



Cnut and Emma of Normandy, the widow of Ethelred,the English King that Cnut defeated

© Getty



The new Roskilde cathedral that stands on the site of Ulf's death

Image: Wiki / PD / UNESCO

MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL

Cnut's involvement in the elimination of his brother-in-law Ulf

Although Cnut proved himself to be a strong and successful king, on several occasions during his reign he found himself at odds with his supporters, even members of his extended family. Ulf was Cnut's brother-in-law, married to his sister Estrid. In the lead-up to the Battle of Holy River, there were suggestions that Ulf's loyalty was suspect. Cnut's young son, Harthacnut, was in Denmark as its nominal ruler and it seems that Ulf tried to dominate political affairs there in the absence of a powerful king resident in the country.

Nevertheless, Ulf appears to have been with Cnut when he took part in the hard-fought battle at Holy River. After, they returned to Denmark together to the royal capital, Roskilde. There was soon a family squabble, according to some accounts over a chess game. But it may though have been something less insignificant such as a breakdown in trust between the two that led to Cnut's next action.

Clearly angered by something that had taken place, Cnut sent men to eliminate Ulf once and for all. They found him inside Roskilde Cathedral (though some accounts say Ulf was on the royal farm), not the imposing building that one sees now with the tombs of many of Denmark's later monarchs but a much humbler wooden 'stave' church of simple design and intimate size. While some men hesitated to carry out their orders given the sacred nature of the place, one of them, Ivar White, had no such scruples and struck Ulf dead.

This un-Christian act must have created alarm, and the fact Cnut was able to survive this incident with his reputation relatively intact speaks highly of his political skills. However, it would seem that his own sister was not prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt and her son Sweyn was sent into protective exile for the remainder of Cnut's life. Cnut paid large sums of money to Estrid to allow her to build a grander structure at Roskilde, perhaps as a way of salving a guilty conscience.

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A copperplate engraving of Cnut fighting Edmund Ironside, published in 1773

Norway too had once been part of the empire of Sweyn Forkbeard, Cnut's father. However, it had not remained so for long before a rebellion there threw off Danish rule. The beneficiary of that uprising and the current king of Norway was a man named Olaf Haraldsson. Olaf allied himself with the king of Sweden and together they raised an army with a view to attacking Denmark. Cnut got together an army of his own to face up to the threat. The two forces clashed in southern Sweden at the Battle of Holy River. It was an indecisive confrontation, but Cnut succeeded in hanging on to Denmark.

Shortly after the ruthless elimination of his brother-in-law, Ulf, in Roskilde Cathedral, which followed on soon after, Cnut undertook perhaps the greatest mission of his life when he journeyed to Rome to be present at the coronation of the Holy Roman Emperor, Conrad II. To be in attendance at this ceremony was a great mark of recognition for a man who was effectively a Viking king. It made a great impression on many European statesmen as well as Cnut's own people.

Perhaps the most significant part of Cnut's reign was the way in which he built close relationships with the church. He was a generous patron of a number of religious establishments in both England and Denmark. He also appointed allies into key positions of influence in the church, such as when Æthelnoth was made archbishop of Canterbury in 1020. This helped to build Cnut's influence and his reputation and further strengthen his position.

However, the question of Norway was unfinished business as far as Cnut was concerned. Following his return from the indecisive battle at Holy River, King Olaf's position had become increasingly fragile back in Norway. It was then a very fragmented country with a number of regions, especially those positioned in the wild north that were virtually ungovernable. Cnut took advantage of the significant wealth of England to make gifts to disaffected nobles in Norway. When Cnut arrived with a massive army, the position of Olaf quickly collapsed.

Olaf was forced to flee for his life, but returned soon after in a vain attempt to reclaim the country. At his side was his half-brother Harald, who later – as Harald Hardrada ('the Ruthless') – was to become one of the most famous of all Vikings and would meet his end in a cataclysmic encounter at Stamford Bridge in Yorkshire in 1066. Olaf lost his life in the battle at Stiklestad – he was a staunch Christian ruler and soon after his death was canonised. Saint Olaf would prove much more successful in death than King Olaf ever was in life.

But Cnut did not prove a success as king of Norway. He appointed his first wife, Ælfgifu, as his regent in the country along with their son, Sweyn. However, a disastrous famine undermined their position; this was a time of great suffering across much of the continent and not just in Scandinavia. Their rule was allegedly very harsh and there were a number of revolts that led to the collapse of Cnut's regime there. Olaf's son, Magnus, soon became king in his stead.

Norway was only ever a temporary part of Cnut's 'empire'. Perhaps the dispersed nature of the territories that he ruled made them inherently hard to govern. Certainly the diversity of his subjects, and the relative 'newness' of all three core countries in it – England, Denmark and Norway – presented him with great challenges. It was a tough act for anyone to pull off and certainly there were indications that some of those around him, especially the sons who would have to run his territories after his death (and to a significant extent would be expected to do so when he was alive) were not up to the task, though admittedly they were still young.

A stained glass image of Cnut from Canterbury Cathedral

"CNUT WAS A 'MODERN' RULER, ONE WHO COULD SIT AT THE HIGH TABLE OF EUROPEAN POLITICS"

Cnut certainly had imperial pretensions. His visit to Rome made a great impact on him. He was so impressed at the grandeur and magnificence of the great Imperial Crown that Conrad II wore at his coronation that he had a replica made for himself. Letters back to England soon afterwards included several implicit imperial references, for example when Cnut ostentatiously described himself as 'King of England, Denmark, Norway [not at the time conquered] and part of Sweden'. There was little doubt that Cnut had seen something of the magnificence and associated power that came from being an emperor and he took to modelling himself on one to a certain extent.

Yet, paradoxically, Cnut also became renowned for his humility. His great generosity to the Christian church has already been mentioned but his actions also won respect. On a visit to the north of England late in his reign he walked five miles barefoot to visit the tomb of the revered St Cuthbert in Durham. Chroniclers of the time wrote of a man who was more monk than king. Although these attributes may have been exaggerated, as was common with the chroniclers of the time, this suggests a man who wanted to make a strong impression for his Christian acts.

This was an approach that was perhaps based as much on the political advantages that came from it as from any deeply held personal convictions. It made Cnut a 'modern' ruler, one who could sit at the high table of European politics as an equal rather than be regarded with suspicion by his fellow rulers as a potential raider. This brought him great political benefits, and perhaps the most significant was his alliance with Conrad II. Denmark and the Holy Roman Empire shared a border – one which had been porous and problematic – but the alliance brought stability, enabling Cnut to concentrate his efforts on his unfinished business in Norway. Conrad's son married Cnut's daughter,

The obverse (front) of a silver penny of King Cnut, dated c.1017-23

Image: Wiki /PD / York Museums Trust

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King Harthacnut, son of Cnut and Emma of Normandy, King of England from 1040-42

Gunhilda, a sign of the great importance of Cnut in European affairs.

Alongside this, Cnut appeared to retain other more 'Viking' characteristics. From what we know, he was a lover of the sagas every bit as much as more traditional Scandinavian rulers had been before him. He himself appears in Viking sagas, though reflecting these extraordinary changing times the heroes here were now typically Christian rather than followers of Odin or Thor. This was a sure sign that the world was changing rapidly, though some parts of Scandinavia would stay stubbornly pagan well beyond the period covered by Cnut's reign. For example, Uppsala in Sweden was long a centre of worship for the old gods and half a century after Cnut's death the Christian writer Adam of Hamburg-Bremen was writing of the horrific rites of animal and human sacrifice that were still practised there.

However, Cnut lived a very active life and it seems to have taken its toll. There are a few hints that he was suffering from some illness that was wearing him down, and on 12 November 1035 he breathed his last at Shaftesbury in Dorset. The place of his death is symbolically interesting because the tomb of the martyred English king and saint, Edward, resided there. Throughout his life, Cnut had acted with great respect towards the English royal family that he had replaced. He, as we have seen, emphasised his appreciation of the late, great Edgar by adopting his laws. He even visited the tomb of Edmund Ironside at Glastonbury Abbey where he left behind a splendid gift of cloak adorned with peacock feathers, a symbol of both Imperial Byzantine grandeur and also Christian resurrection.

His magnanimity marked him out as a wise man, able to build bridges with the people that he had conquered. Although he taxed his people heavily, they, for their part, seem to have accepted his right to rule them; he did at least give them peace and security, a welcome contrast to the four decades that preceded his reign. He was generally regarded by them with respect rather than love. But it was a welcome breathing space after the trauma of the reign of Æthelred 'the Unready'.

Cnut was buried in the great Anglo-Saxon royal mausoleum in Winchester. Here he metaphorically rubbed shoulders with other English kings and saints. In its own way it was another sign of a king who wished to assimilate rather than dictate to his English subjects. Ironically Cnut's bones were not to find peace in death – in the 16th century his remains and those of his wife Emma were packed together into a mortuary chest and placed high in the presbytery of Winchester Cathedral.

When Winchester Cathedral was entered by Parliamentarian forces in the great Civil War of the 17th century, anti-monarchist soldiers broke open the chests and used the leg-bones to break the splendid stained glass of the West Window. Following the restoration of the English monarchy in 1660, the bones were gathered together and placed in the mortuary chests once more, but by this time they were hopelessly jumbled up; no one knew who went where. At the time of writing, a temporary laboratory has been set up in Winchester Cathedral to try and match the right bones with the right mortuary chests so that Cnut and Emma can once more rest side by side in peace.

"CNUT LIVED A VERY ACTIVE LIFE AND IT SEEMS TO HAVE TAKEN ITS TOLL"

The greatness of Cnut's achievements in building an extended kingdom that encompassed both England and Scandinavia can perhaps best be demonstrated by how quickly his 'empire' began to fall apart after his death. Without his great energy, vision and drive his successors were incapable of keeping it intact. Harold Harefoot, his son from his union with Ælfgifu of Northampton, and Harthacnut, from his marriage with Emma, both became king in due course. But neither lasted for very long, nor gave any indication that, had they lived, they would have been very successful monarchs. Harold became sole king of England after Cnut's death but died himself soon after. Harthacnut then became king. He too did not survive very long, dying after over-indulging at a wedding feast. With none of Cnut's sons now living, in 1042 the throne reverted back to the Anglo-Saxon bloodline when Edward 'the Confessor' became king. He traced his ancestry back to the line of Cerdic of Wessex, a 6th century ruler who claimed descent from both Adam of biblical fame and the Germanic/Norse god Woden/Odin. In a somewhat diluted form, after several diversions across the centuries, traces of that bloodline still remain in the British royal family.

Cnut was the only king to ever rule both England and Denmark (if we were to exclude the short reign of Harthacnut). He capably governed both, dextrously managing England's great wealth to full advantage and emulating some of the most significant elements of her government to build a strong nation-state in Denmark. He used English churchmen to help build the young church in Denmark as well as using more practical tools such as the employment of English moneyers to develop Danish coinage.

It would be true to say that the practical results of King Cnut's reign were more deeply felt in the long-run in Denmark rather than England, but his reign was nonetheless a fascinating period in English and European history and a remarkable achievement in its own right.

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Operator's Handbook

ALBATROS

The last, but perhaps least successful, of Germany's line of Albatros fighters during World War I

WORDS **STUART HADAWAY**

PROMINENT ENGINE
Large parts of the engine stood free of the cowling for ease of access, while metal panels around the nose were easily removed to facilitate maintenance.

BETTER VISIBILITY
The 'N' shaped struts allowed the upper wing to be lower-set, giving the pilot a better view forward and above, without losing structural strength.

WEAK POINT
The lower main spar was a notorious weak point on the D.V and D.Va, although moving it forward in the D.Va mitigated the problem to some extent.

WORDS STUART HADAWAY

© Getty

D.VA

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ALBATROS D.VA

COMMISSIONED:	1917
ORIGIN:	GERMANY
LENGTH:	7.33M (24FT)
WINGSPAN:	9.05M (29FT 8IN)
ENGINE:	MERCEDES D.IIIA 127-138 KW (170-185HP)
CREW:	1
PRIMARY WEAPON:	2 X LMG08/15 SPANDAU 7.92MM (0.312IN) MACHINE GUNS

Image: Wiki / PD / Gov

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Manfred von Richthofen's Albatros D.V – he was not impressed by the design

The Albatros Flugzeugwerke produced a line of Germany's most successful fighters from 1916 onwards. The D.I had regained air superiority from the British over the Somme in the autumn of 1916, soon supported by the improved D.II. The redesigned D.III followed in early 1917 and would be the mount most used by Manfred 'The Red Baron' von Richthofen, the highest-scoring ace of the war. The D.V was more drastically redesigned still, although it retained the distinctive Albatros streamlined fuselage and spade-like tailplanes.

However, when the D.V entered service in the early summer of 1917 it proved to have several serious flaws, including an underpowered engine and structural weakness in both upper and lower wings. The improved D.Va followed in the late summer, with a more powerful engine and other improvements, but it still never quite lived up to its promise. The Albatros D.Vs and D.Vas (as well as many older D.IIIs) formed the bulk of the German fighter force until the end of the war. They could hold their own in competent hands against the latest Allied fighters, but were not able to replicate the successes enjoyed in 1916 and early 1917.

Pilots of Jasta 2 pose with a D.Va

© Alamy

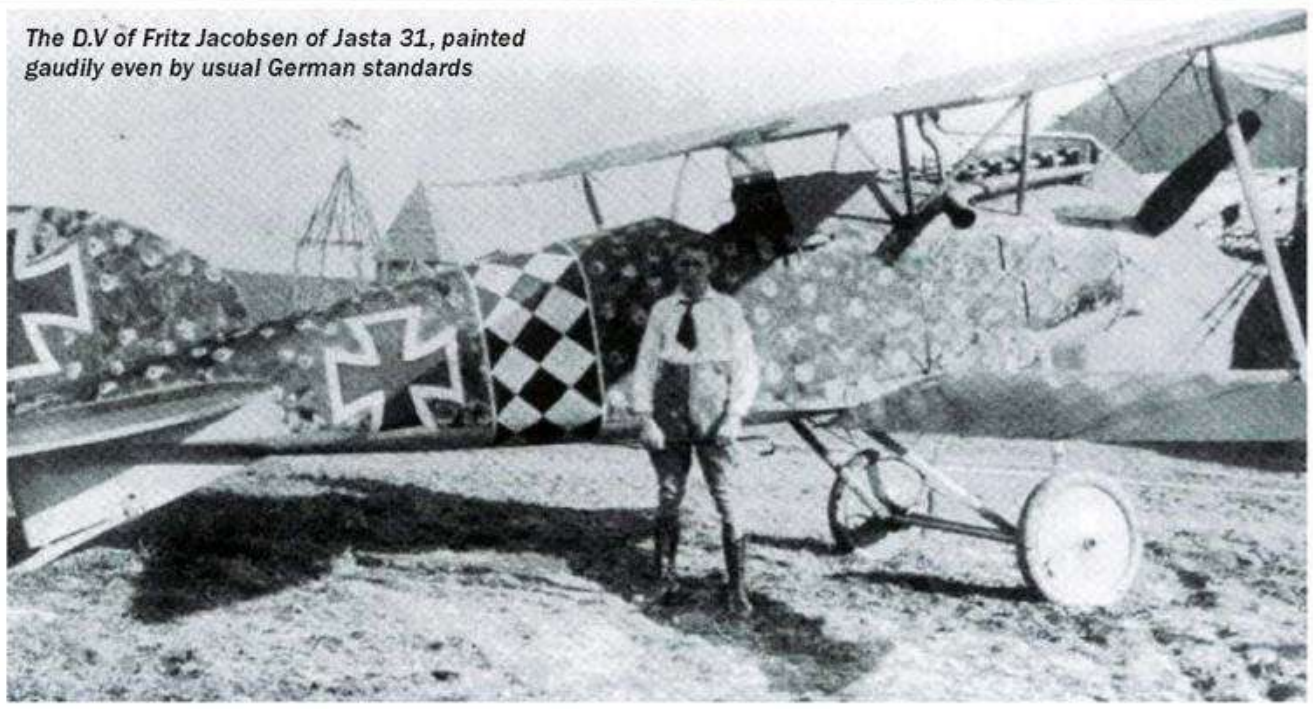
HARD-SKINNED FUSELAGE

While most contemporary aircraft were fabric-covered, the Albatros had a plywood skin over a frame of eight longerons to form a semi-monocoque structure.

"ALBATROS FIGHTERS HAD A DISTINCTIVE LOOK, WITH SMOOTH, STREAMLINED PLYWOOD SEMI-MONOCOQUE FUSELAGES"

A pilot of JG26 in front of his Albatros, with the twin-Spandau guns clearly visible in front of the cockpit

The D.V of Fritz Jacobsen of Jasta 31, painted gaudily even by usual German standards



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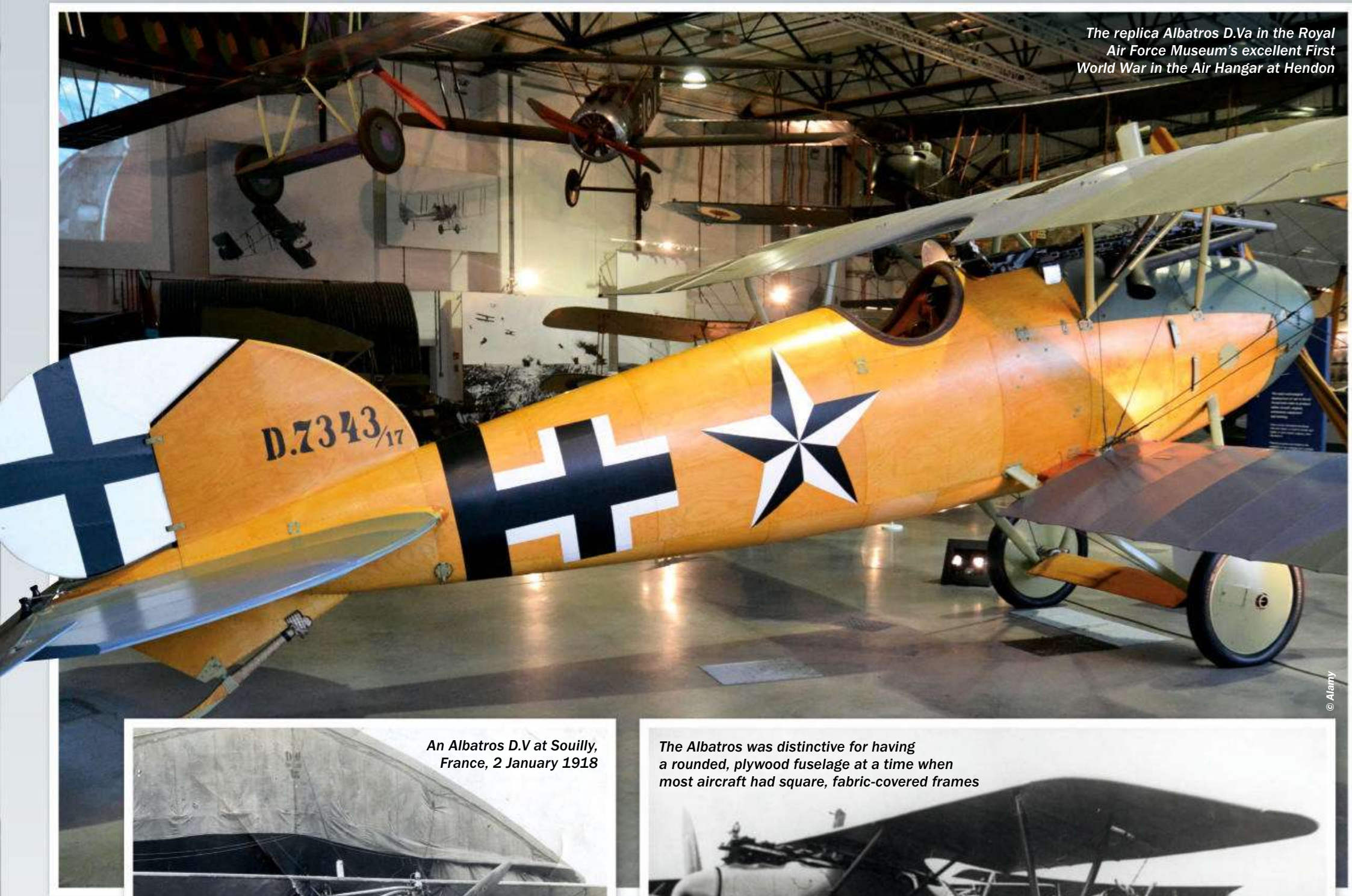
ARMAMENT

The Albatros D.V was equipped with two fixed LMG08/15 7.92mm (0.302in) machine guns, mounted on the cowling in front of the cockpit, and fired forwards through the propeller by means of a direct flexible drive interrupter gear to prevent bullets hitting the blades. The LMG08/15 was a stripped down and air-cooled version of the standard German army machine gun. Each gun was operated by a separate trigger and could be fired individually. It was belt-fed, with the empty belts being fed into drums for re-use, while spent cartridges were ejected overboard.



The replica Albatros D.Va in the Royal Air Force Museum's excellent First World War in the Air Hangar at Hendon

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An Albatros D.V at Souilly, France, 2 January 1918

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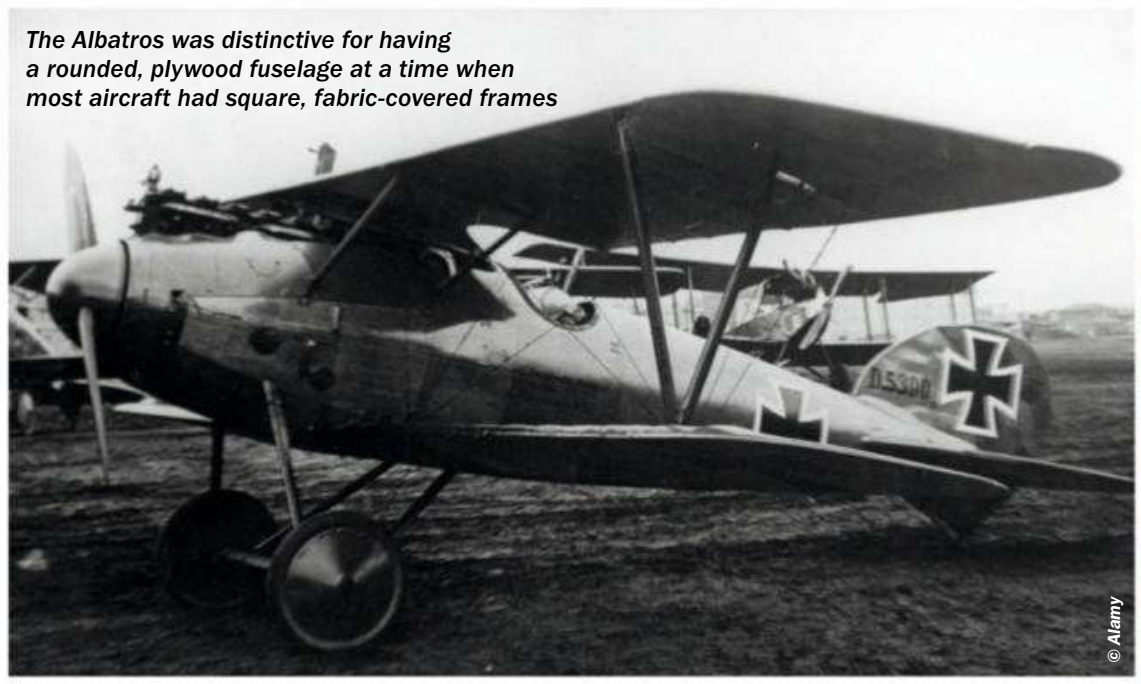

The Albatros was distinctive for having a rounded, plywood fuselage at a time when most aircraft had square, fabric-covered frames

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DESIGN

Albatros fighters had a distinctive look, with smooth, streamlined plywood semi-monocoque fuselages. The D.V was more rounded than earlier models, which had flatter sides. The wings were wooden-framed and fabric-covered, and had two weaknesses. The tips of the upper wing were prone to cracking and folding, which was a problem but not fatal. More seriously, the main spar of the lower planes was prone to breaking in a dive, due to vibration rather than stresses. The cause took a long time to identify and was never fully rectified.

The nose of the Albatros was carefully designed for streamlining and to aid engine cooling

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ENGINE

The D.V had a Mercedes D.III 120kW (160hp), but this was upgraded to the D.IIIa in the D.Va, with 127-138kW (170-185hp) obtained by raising the compression ratio and enlarging the cylinder and pistons. It was installed with much of the cylinder block exposed for ease of maintenance. A large spinner was fitted over the two-bladed propeller, for better aerodynamics. The spinner was also slightly smaller in diameter than the fuselage behind, allowing air to flow into the cowling and over the crankcase to aid cooling.

"MANFRED VON RICHTHOFEN DAMNED THE AIRCRAFT AS 'SO OBSOLETE AND SO RIDICULOUSLY INFERIOR'"

Image: Wiki / PD / Roland Turner

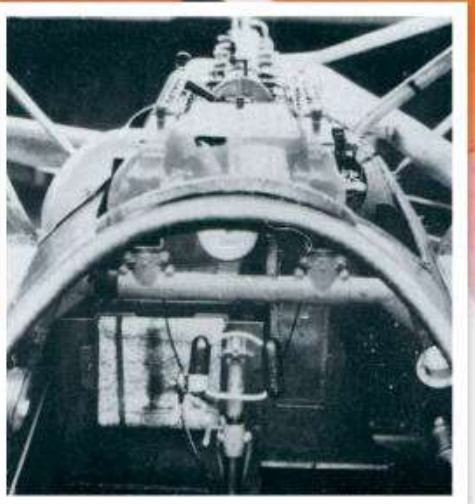

Image: Wiki / PD / US

The sparse and functional cockpit of a D.V

Cockpit of a flying replica Albatros D.Va

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COCKPIT

The cockpit of the Albatros was quite sparse even by World War I standards, with basic instruments being fitted in around the butts of the two Spandau machine guns, which jutted back in front of the pilot. The forward wall of the cockpit was formed by the main fuel tank. The throttle, on the left, worked by pulling back to accelerate, and the spade-handled control column was equipped with two separate triggers, one for each gun.

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***Above:** A captured Albatros D.Va at El Affule aerodrome, Palestine, September 1918*

The Red Baron was scathing about the D.V's performance

SERVICE HISTORY

The Albatros D.V was commissioned in April 1917 and entered service the following month. However, it failed to live up to expectations, and in July Manfred von Richthofen damned the aircraft as "so obsolete and so ridiculously inferior". The designers responded with the D.Va, which was intended to fix the most blatant problems – lack of power (and thus speed and manoeuvrability), and certain structural weaknesses. The D.Va entered service in October 1917, but although better in some ways it was still mediocre overall. However, until the arrival of the Fokker D.VII in the spring of 1918 it was the best that the German flying services had, and formed the backbone of most fighter units. By April 1918, over 1,000 D.Vs and D.Vas were in service, but in that month production ceased and numbers gradually fell throughout the rest of the war as attrition took hold.

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The D.Vas of Jasta 12 take off in France

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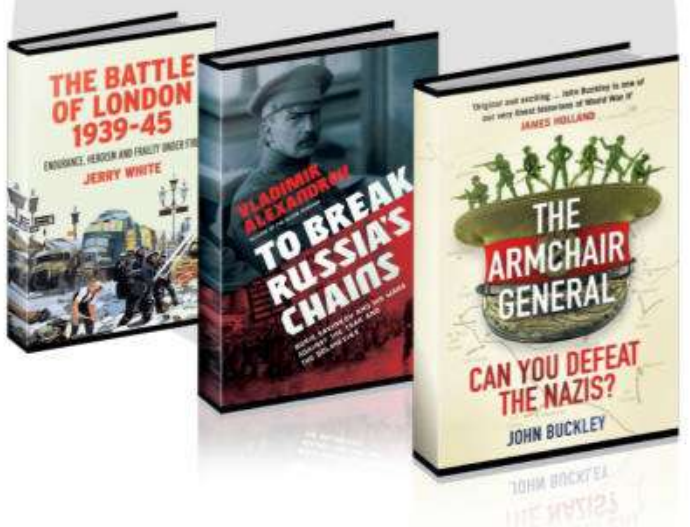

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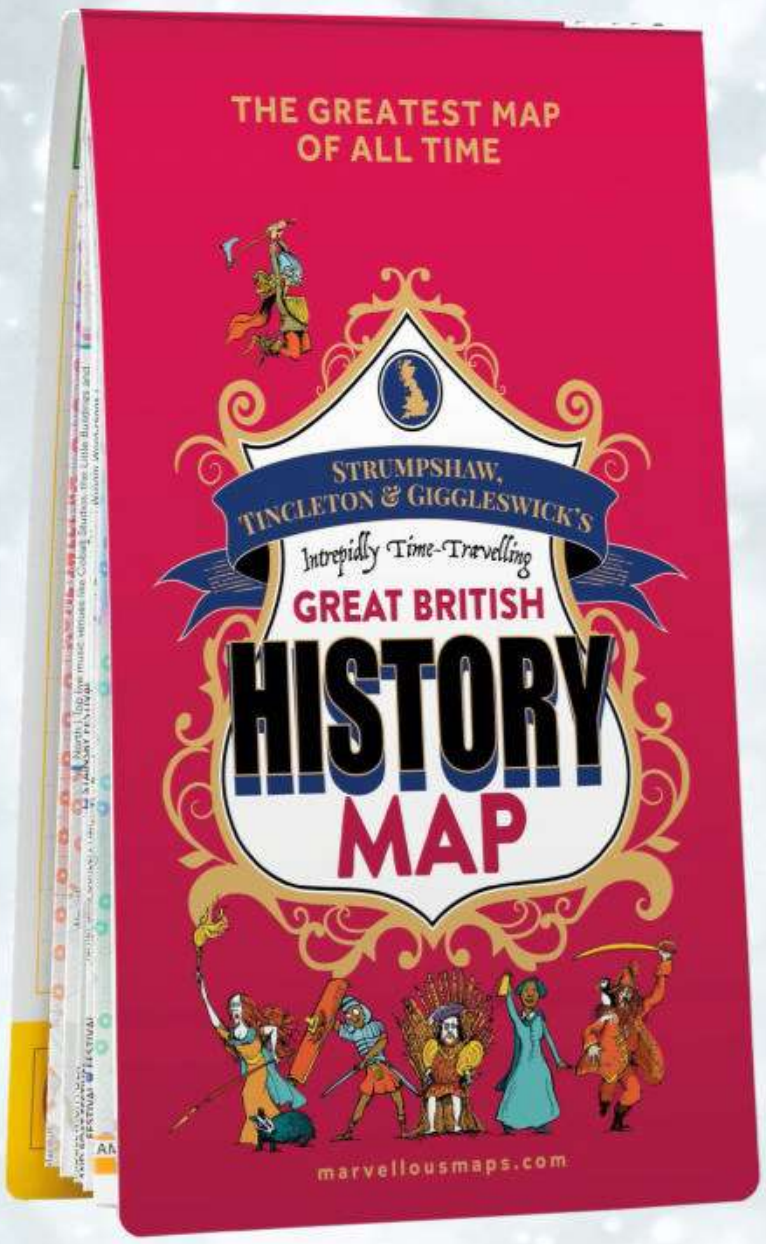

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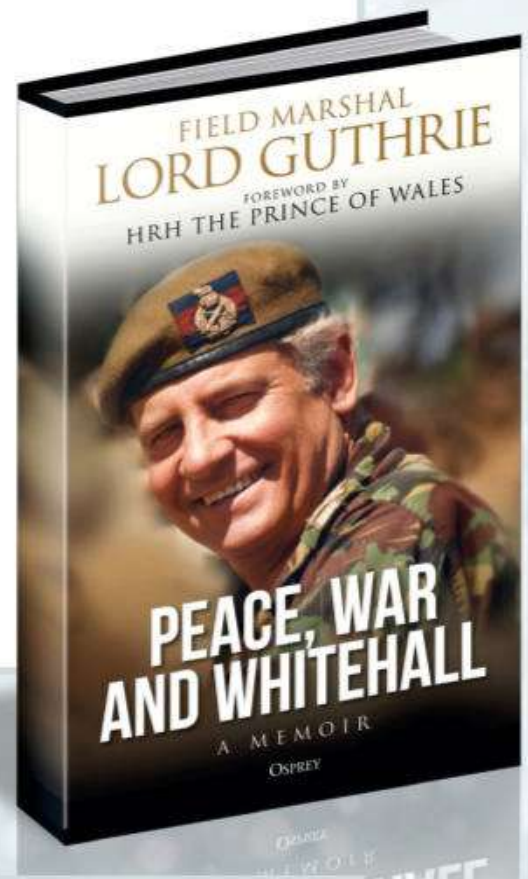

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Lord Ashcroft, who has been fascinated by bravery since he was a young boy, has amassed several medal collections over the past four decades, including the world's largest collection of Victoria Crosses, Britain and the Commonwealth's most prestigious gallantry award.

Falklands War Heroes tells the stories behind his collection of valour and service medals awarded for the Falklands War. The collection, almost certainly the largest of its kind in the world, spans all the major events of the conflict.

This book, which contains nearly 40 individual write-ups, has been written to mark the 40th anniversary of the war. Lord Ashcroft champions the outstanding bravery of our Armed Forces during an undeclared war that was fought and won over ten weeks in the most challenging conditions.

THE CHURCHILL GIRLS

RRP: £20 thehistorypress.co.uk

The life of Winston Churchill has been explored and retold countless times, but what about the lives of his daughters Diana, Sarah, Marigold and Mary? Rachel Trethewey looks to uncover these stories in *The Churchill Girls*, which looks past the glitz and glamour of some of their more famous relatives and offers a behind-the-scenes picture of one of England's most powerful families.

With biographies that cover the build up to war, life in WWII and the aftermath, Trethewey offers a unique perspective on some of the events that shaped the 20th century, from Parliament to Potsdam. Thanks to previously unpublished family letters, we get to delve deeper into the Churchill family than ever before.

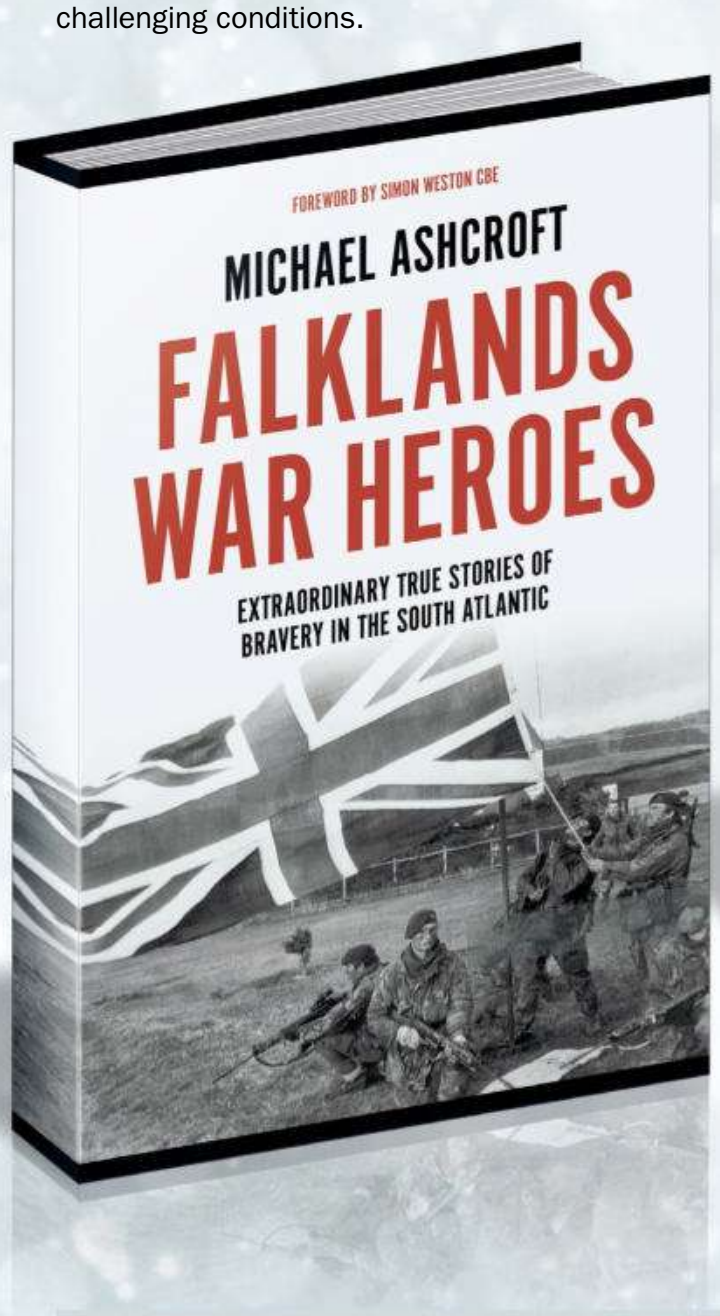
SPIRITS OF THE OTHERWORLD

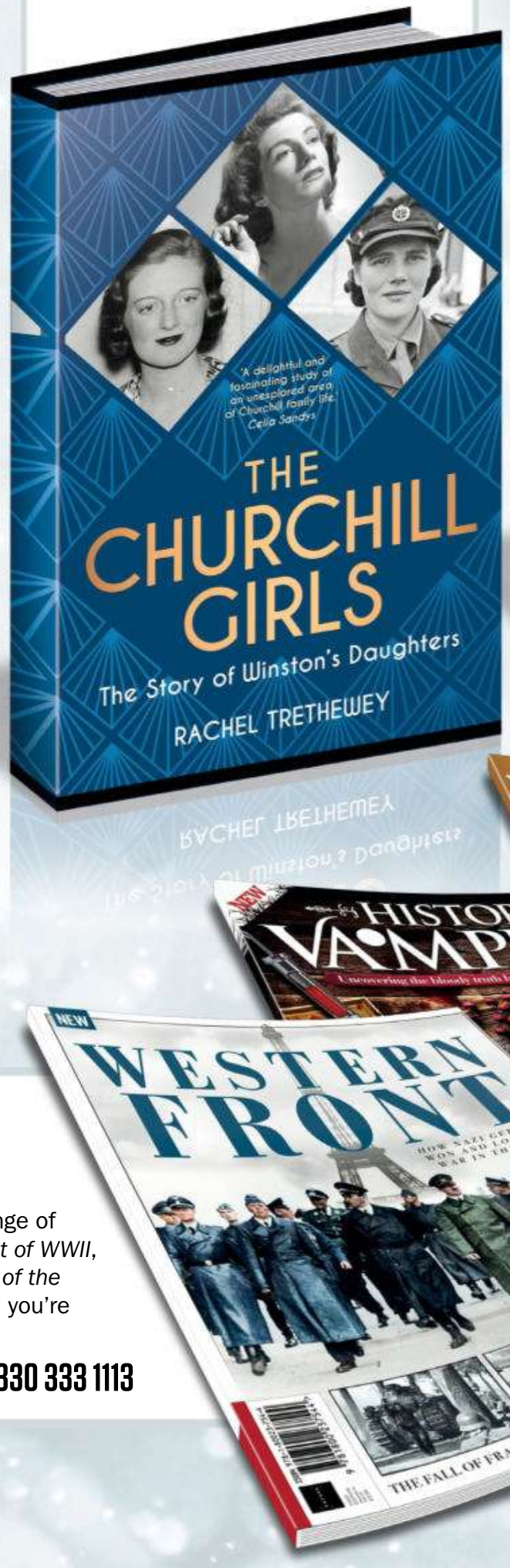
RRP: £14.99

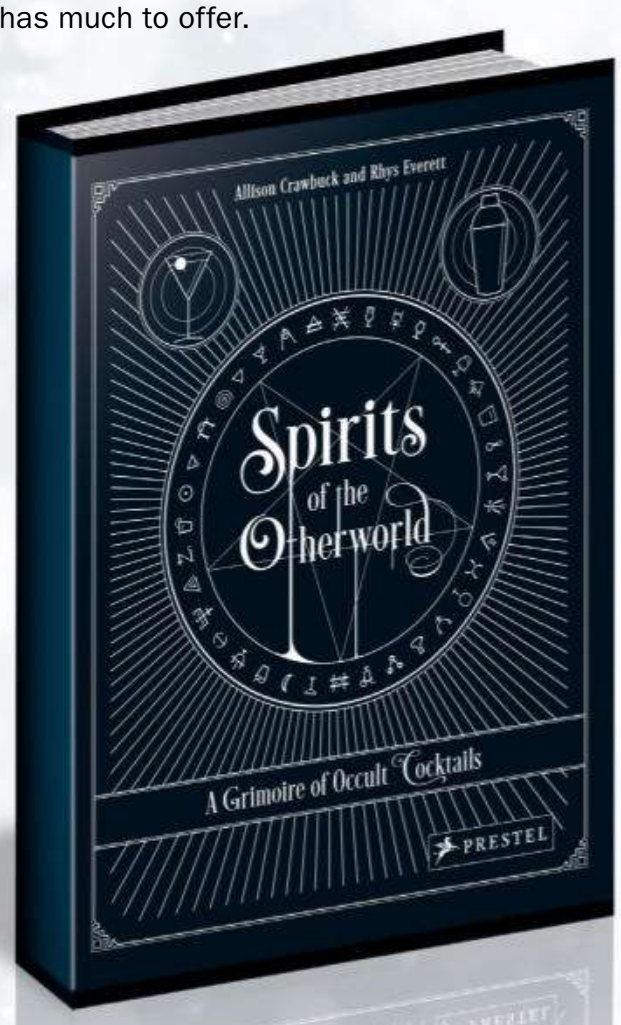
prestel.com

Get into the spirit in more ways than one this Christmas by giving someone a copy of this fascinating recipe book. *Spirits Of The Otherworld: A Grimoire Of Occult Cocktails & Drinking Rituals* offers a blend of folktales, history and mixology that will be a treat for your mind and your taste buds.

From old druid tales to England's most famous prophetess Mother Shipton, this compelling book offers tips for stocking your drinks cabinet and what natural ingredients might come in handy too. For any occult, history or cocktail fan in your life, this book has much to offer.


FOREWORD BY SIMON WESTON CBE
MICHAEL ASHCROFT
FALKLANDS WAR HEROES
EXTRAORDINARY TRUE STORIES OF BRAVERY IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC


'A delightful and fascinating study of an unexplored area of Churchill family life.' Celia Sandys
THE CHURCHILL GIRLS
The Story of Winston's Daughters
RACHEL TRETHEWEY



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MUSEUMS & EVENTS

Discover the Imperial War Museum's plans for Christmas, York's regimental museum and a Norman castle in Essex that now functions as a picturesque setting for many events

December at the IWM

The Imperial War Museum is hosting several events throughout the last month of 2021, including an innovative *Horrible Histories* stage show

Many of IWM's December events are happening at its museum in Duxford, Cambridgeshire

With five museums spread across England, the Imperial War Museum has much to offer visitors in the build up to the festive season. December 2021 is a busy month for the organisation, with both Christmas and non-Christmas themed events that cater for military history enthusiasts and their families.

On the weekends of 4-5 and 11-12 December, IWM North in Greater Manchester and IWM London are hosting a drop-in session called Wartime Mealtimes. Developed in partnership with RA Venues, this interactive experience will uncover the impact of war on everyday life through the lens of food. Visitors can learn about rations across the ages, discover recipes from WWII and join demonstrations of what could be made with rations.

During the latter part of the month, IWM Duxford in Cambridgeshire is running two events based around Britain's most famous WWII aircraft. On 27-28 December, Spitfire Engineers discovers the science behind wing design, the forces of flight, fuel consumption and engine power. Families can explore four activity stations dedicated to the Spitfire inside Duxford's Conservation Hall. They are invited to participate in practical challenges, including making and testing a propeller.

On 29-30 December, Super Spitfires uncovers the secrets of the Spitfire by finding out how technological advances and inventions helped make it one of the most iconic aircraft of all time. Visitors can discover how it has inspired stories, been used in movies and what it's like to fly in the aircraft.

Sandwiched in between Wartime Mealtimes and the Spitfire events is Duxford's special *Horrible Histories Horrible Christmas* pantomime. The famous historical TV sketch comedy based on Terry Deary's bestselling books are taking on the story of how Christmas developed into what it is today. The story follows a young boy who saves Christmas in the company of Charles Dickens, Oliver Cromwell, King Henry VIII and Saint Nicholas himself.

Taking place on 18 and 19 December, the pantomime at Duxford is the world's first drive-in Christmas show. Families will be able to enter the festive spirit in a safe, socially distanced manner in the comfort of their own car. Tickets cost £49.50 (plus a £2.50 booking fee) per car with all facilities, including food, drink and toilets located near the parking and performance area.

All tickets have a 100 percent money-back refund guarantee in case the British government changes Covid-19 guidelines. All vehicles must adhere to their legal limits and governmental guidelines on mixing households.

Horrible Histories has been performing stage shows since 1999

For more information on all these events visit: www.iwm.org.uk/events

York Army Museum

This small but dedicated museum tells the story of two regiments with strong links to Yorkshire

Located in the heart of the city centre, York Army Museum curates the history of two current serving regiments of the British Army: The Royal Dragoon Guards and the Yorkshire Regiment. These cavalry and infantry regiments can trace their histories back over 300 years, with both having a historic connection to Yorkshire.

The regimental histories date back to 1685 with the current units' antecedents including six dragoon and three Yorkshire regiments. The museum's fascinating collections contain artefacts connected to famous figures and battles. These include a Crimean War dragoon helmet worn at the Battle of Balaklava; the medals of Captain Lawrence Oates, who died with Captain Scott in the Antarctic; and a 1937 service dress worn by King George VI.

There are regular talks and events that uncover the regiments' histories. Due to the changing nature of Covid-19 guidelines, many of these talks are online and there is also a York Army Museum Podcast. Funded by a Heritage Lottery Fund grant, the podcast's aim is to record oral history interviews to provide a permanent record of the diverse experience of the regiments and their predecessors. Interviews include experiences from the World Wars, Korea, Aden, Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan as well as stories of family life in the British Army.

For more information: www.yorkarmymuseum.co.uk

The museum is only a few minutes' walk away from the Jorvik Viking Centre in York

Ernest Brooks took this famous photograph of men from 8th Battalion, East Yorkshire Regiment during the Battle of Broodseinde in 1917

Essex's fortified venue

Hedingham Castle is a unique example of an intact Norman keep, and it hosts events ranging from historical re-enactments to weddings

Located in Essex, Hedingham Castle was built c.1100 with its keep being constructed around 1140. It is prominently positioned on a hill above the village of Castle Hedingham, which is near the county borders of Cambridgeshire and Suffolk. Queen Matilda, the consort of King Stephen (r.1135-54) died at the castle in 1152 and it was besieged twice during the reign of King John in the early 13th century. The seat of the de Vere family for centuries, Hedingham was at one time owned by Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, who some believe to be the writer of the works attributed to William Shakespeare.

The Norman keep is now the only medieval structure of the castle that has survived but it is considered to be one of the best preserved buildings of its kind in England. It has since been used as a film and TV location for productions such as the BBC's *Ivanhoe* and *A History of Britain*. Hedingham is still a private home but the keep and grounds are open to the public. Educational visits take place throughout the year and it holds frequent events such as plays, car shows and historical re-enactments. The castle is also used for weddings, parties, exclusive hire and corporate retreats.

Hedingham Castle's keep has five floors, including a Banqueting Hall that has a large fireplace and a central arch extending over two storeys

Two re-enactors take part in a knight's jousting tournament at Hedingham

For more information visit: www.hedinghamcastle.co.uk

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WWII THIS MONTH...

NOVEMBER 1941

To commemorate 80 years since the Second World War, **History of War** will be taking a look at some of the key events taking place during each month of the conflict

OPERATION CRUSADER

On 18 November General Claude Auchinleck launched his attempt to break the Siege of Tobruk and push the Axis forces back west. The operation began following an audacious commando raid on the Axis lines, called Operation Flipper. This included an assault on Rommel's North African HQ, with the objective of killing or capturing the Desert Fox himself, though this ended in failure. Operation Crusader did succeed in lifting the Siege of Tobruk by the end of the month, though only temporarily. Rommel was able to retreat west with a majority of his forces intact to launch a second offensive in January 1942.

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ROSTOV STREET FIGHT

Soviet troops are pictured in the city of Rostov during street fighting that took place as they defended the city. After crossing the Mius River on 17 November, Axis forces captured Rostov along with thousands of Soviet troops. The Red Army launched a counterattack on 27 November and succeeded in driving the Germans out of the city. Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt withdrew 1st Panzer Army after it became clear it would be surrounded and cut off from Army Group South by the Soviets.

ARK ROYAL CREW RETURNS

On 13 November, 1941, the Royal Navy carrier HMS Ark Royal was torpedoed off the coast of Gibraltar by German U-boat U-81, captained by Kapitänleutnant Friedrich Guggenberger. The carrier was severely damaged in the attack and sank the following day. Miraculously only one crew member, Able Seaman Edward Mitchell, was lost in the sinking, and the remaining crew were transported back to the UK.

AWM OPENS

A work in progress since the end of the First World War, the Australian War Memorial was finally completed and officially opened on 11 November, 1941, located in the suburb of Campbell in the capital city of Canberra. Pictured are Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh walking along the Hall of Memory on 16 February 1954.

© Getty

REVIEWS

Our pick of the latest military history books and films

THE BATTLE OF LONDON 1939-45

A WORTHY AND HIGHLY ACCESSIBLE ACCOUNT OF THE CAPITAL AT WAR

Author: Jerry White **Publisher:** Vintage / Penguin Random House UK
Price: £30 **On sale:** Out now

While the story of London during the Second World War – and especially during the Blitz – has been told and retold across subsequent decades, this latest work by Jerry White will surely stand as the definitive and most readable account of the city during the conflict.

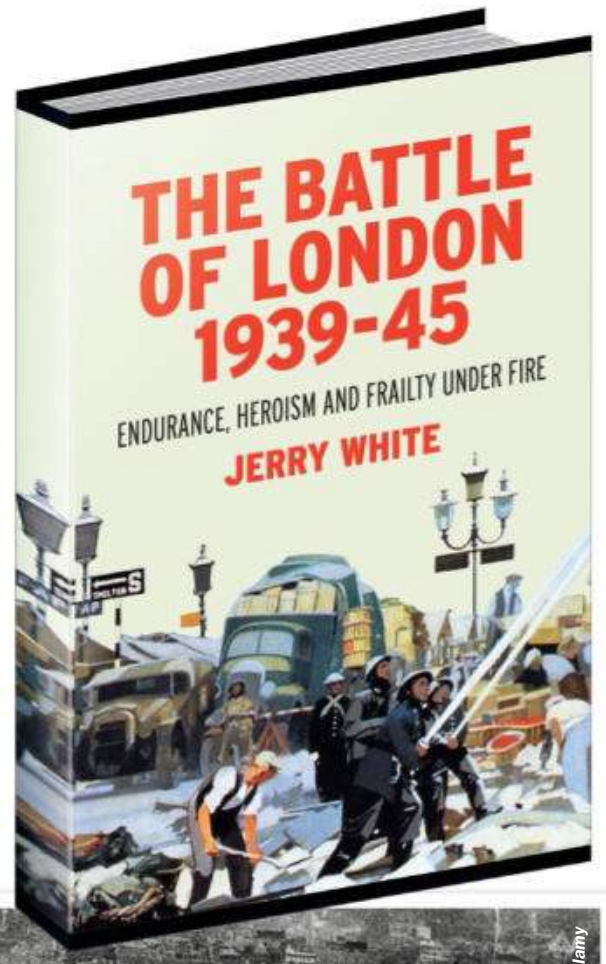
The Battle of London 1939-45 is the most meticulously researched social history of wartime London that one could ever hope to find, with the reference notes and bibliography standing testament to the depth of White's study of this fascinating topic. Not only that, but the detail is woven together in such a way, and so colourfully, that it frequently pulls the reader up short with the realisation that the author did not actually experience himself all that he writes about.

As Emeritus Professor of London History at Birkbeck, University of London, White's credentials for writing this book are beyond impeccable. This is especially so when one considers White has already written numerous highly acclaimed titles covering a widely differing range of aspects of London history. And this reviewer knew at once that *The Battle of London 1939-45* would be a quality book having quite recently been utterly absorbed in another of the author's titles, *Zeppelin Nights*.

With the Second World War transforming London beyond recognition in terms of its infrastructure and the life of its inhabitants, White skilfully weaves together every imaginable aspect of life in wartime London, painting an intimate picture of the city and the people within it. At times gritty and visceral, White certainly pulls no punches. Although this is no rose-tinted glimpse of any such thing as a 'Blitz Spirit', the author certainly highlights the spirit of endurance and heroism across those momentous years. However, he also points out the human frailty that necessarily accompanied the endurance and heroism of the city's people. It is certainly the case that White forensically exposes the myth of Britain's collective 'memory' of the Blitz which has become so embedded in the national psyche.

In putting this wonderful narrative together, the author has mined some rich and often unexpected veins of pure historical gold. He reveals to the reader those nuggets in a way which sometimes gently, and sometimes brutally, exposes the reality behind those years – years that have become so enmeshed in the wider public's misconceptions as to how it really was. This, though, is not revisionism. This is simply telling the truth – and that truth is often far more remarkable than the myth.

There is nothing about *The Battle of London 1939-45* that disappoints. Almost every page contains a riveting and truly astonishing revelation about that fascinating period in the city's history. If the reviewer were to be asked: "Which book should I read to tell me the story of wartime London?" the answer would be: "This one!" This reviewer cannot recommend it highly enough. **AS**



The truth about the Blitz is often more remarkable than the myth that has become part of the British psyche

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THE FORGOTTEN BATTLE

FOLLOWING A CHARACTER-DRIVEN FORMULA SIMILAR TO CHRISTOPHER NOLAN'S *DUNKIRK*, THIS DUTCH FILM HIGHLIGHTS THE OFTEN UNDERREPRESENTED ROLE OF CANADA IN WORLD WAR II

Director: Matthijs van Heijningen Jr.
Starring: Gijs Blom, Jamie Flatters, Susan Radder, Tom Felton
Released: Available on Netflix in the UK now

The Forgotten Battle is an appropriate, if somewhat unassuming, name for the intense and tragic struggle its 124-minute runtime showcases. Set during the little-known Allied assault on the German-controlled Scheldt estuary, it tells the story of three individuals caught up in the events leading to the bloody Battle of Walcheren Causeway.

Dutchman-turned-Nazi soldier Marinus van Staveren (Gijs Blom) faces an inner conflict of loyalty as he helps enable the collaborationist forces oppressing his occupied country. Meanwhile, Teuntje Visser (Susan Radder) finds herself reluctantly thrust into the Dutch Resistance as the Allies draw closer to Zeeland. Then there is British glider pilot Sergeant Will Sinclair (Jamie Flatters), who, along with his comrades, including Captain Tony Turner (Tom Felton), is about to participate in the infamous Operation Market Garden.

Things go badly almost immediately for Will and the airborne soldiers aboard the Airspeed Horsa glider when it is struck by anti-aircraft fire and, as a result, is forced to crash land. Hearing the screams of 'brace!' and watching from the cockpit as the ground seemingly hurtles towards the screen is certainly a tense, horrifying and visually spectacular cinematic moment. The survivors, now caught behind enemy lines, traipse through a treacherous and unforgiving landscape to regroup with Allied forces.

Despite a few unnecessary scenes from the British perspective, not least the beginnings of a story arc that leads nowhere, the plot is sturdy as it ventures into the flooded countryside and communities around the Scheldt estuary. Seamlessly cutting between the main characters in a style akin to Christopher Nolan's *Dunkirk*, each separate tale compels as the stakes become ever higher. Indeed, such is the superb immersion that the transitions between three languages (English, German and Dutch) are seldom noticed.

A series of twists and turns eventually lead to Will joining up with a unit from the First Canadian Army, culminating in an excellently choreographed battle scene that is a fitting recognition of Canada's contribution to the Allied war effort. Deft camera work here lends itself to the claustrophobic feel of mud-coated soldiers clambering between the fallen while facing relentless enemy resistance. At the same time, on the other side of the wire and sandbags, you feel the pressure mounting for Marinus and the German defenders who know they cannot allow the Allies to gain any more ground. It is a testament to Matthijs van Heijningen Jr's directing that you care about what happens on both sides of the causeway, a quality that is both refreshing and somehow simultaneously unsettling.

Nevertheless, those expecting non-stop action will, perhaps, be disappointed because, like *Dunkirk*, the focus is the human aspect of conflict over the conflict itself. Gritty though *The Forgotten Battle* might be on occasions, its heart lies in how the characters' lives collide, which doesn't happen – at least not in full – until near the end of the film. It is worth the wait, however, as the drawing together of three parallel narratives is a journey that never ceases to engage. **AB**

Images © Alamy

THE LAST DUEL

ALL ABOUT HISTORY RECOMMENDS

A GRIPPING DRAMA SET IN THE UNFORGIVING BACKDROP OF MEDIEVAL FRANCE. AND BASED ON REAL EVENTS

Director: Ridley Scott **Cast:** Matt Damon, Adam Driver, Jodie Comer **Released:** Out now

On 29 December 1386, in a frosty field on the outskirts of north Paris, the last legally sanctioned trial by combat took place in France, between knights Jean de Carrouges (Matt Damon) and Jacques Le Gris (Adam Driver). Ridley Scott's latest historical saga *The Last Duel* (2021) explores the sordid backstory leading up to this legendary encounter, drawing parallels between the past and present regarding the treatment of women in society.

Scott's history-based epics, like all his pictures, regardless of genre, are grounded in realistic attention to detail and intelligent storytelling. The renowned filmmaker is a world-builder who brings the past to life like few other mainstream directors; he loves to transport the audience to another time and place, with medieval France depicted here as cold, brutal, muddy and often bloody.

The Last Duel, set over the course of many years, is told in flashback and from a trio of perspectives, with each chapter titled *The Truth According To…* The clever screenplay by Nicole Holofcener, Matt Damon and Ben Affleck (who appears in a scene-stealing role as Count Pierre d'Alençon) is unusually structured – certainly for a Hollywood blockbuster. However, its 'He Said, He Said, She Said' plot brilliantly underlines the salient themes of the film and allows the tale to build to a harrowing conclusion. The narrative gamble pays off.

When Lady Marguerite de Carrouges's (Jodie Comer) husband goes away on business, with everybody out of the house, Le Gris, an erudite and exceedingly crafty man, turns up at the door unannounced, refuses no for an answer and commits a despicable act. Carrouges demands justice for the crime, but what he really wants is retribution against Le Gris, as he's partly inspired by his vanity and his suspicion (sometimes correct) that his fellow noblemen are cheating him. Lady Marguerite is another piece of property others want to take away or ruin for him – it's one more public humiliation to overcome.

If this aspect of the story is ugly and frequently, unexpectedly, hard-hitting, it's also got a tension-relieving black vein of humour coursing throughout. This offers the audience a satirical depiction of mediocre men, with their insecurities and chest-puffing behaviour openly mocked. Add to this the exquisite costumes, vivid period sets and exterior locations, brooding visuals, excellent performances by the cast, the fantastic staging of battles and the nail-biting duel itself.

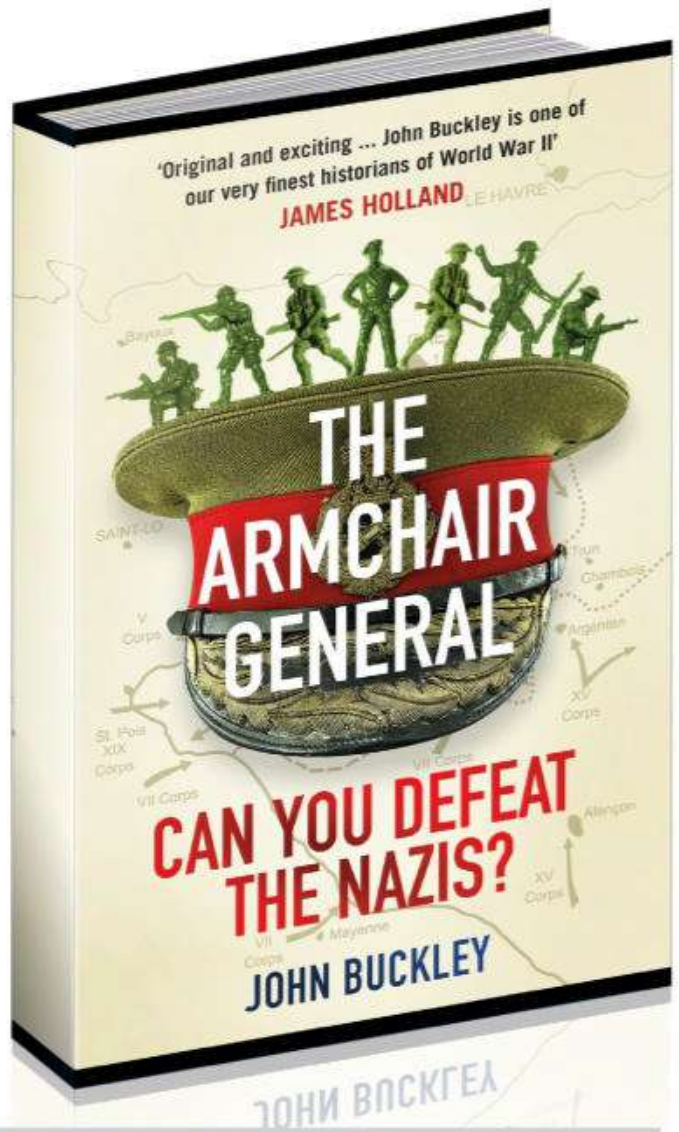
Matt Damon as meathead Carrouges has rarely been this good and Adam Driver plays a total and irredeemable villain whose comeuppance you'll savour. But it's Jodie Comer's Lady Marguerite, an initially voiceless woman caught in the middle of a bitter and foolish feud between two horrible men, threatened with execution herself, who emerges from background figure to vital presence.

When she gets to tell her story, we see a much clearer and truer picture of events, who these men are, what makes them tick, why they're so awful, and why her ordeal is universal. Very often female victims aren't believed, a problem that's as true now as it was in 1386. **MC**

THE ARMCHAIR GENERAL

EIGHT KEY DECISIONS THAT ALTERED THE COURSE OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR, EACH OF WHICH HAD THE POTENTIAL TO BRING ABOUT SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN THE OUTCOME OF THE CONFLICT

Author: John Buckley **Publisher:** Century **Price:** £14.99 **On sale:** Out now


'Original and exciting ... John Buckley is one of our very finest historians of World War II'
JAMES HOLLAND
THE ARMCHAIR GENERAL
CAN YOU DEFEAT THE NAZIS?
JOHN BUCKLEY

George MacDonald Fraser, of Flashman renown, once said in a talk about his experiences in the Burma Campaign in 1943 that war was ghastly and frightful, but that it could also be humorous. Here John Buckley, reflecting on the bungled British paratrooper assault at Arnhem in 1944, highlights the role of crucial political decisions in military history, which in this case brings to mind MacDonald's unorthodox remark, in that British paratroopers were dropped too far from the targeted bridge. The author underscores the importance of military choices and the enduring fascination of the impact of alternative outcomes if those choices and decisions had been different.

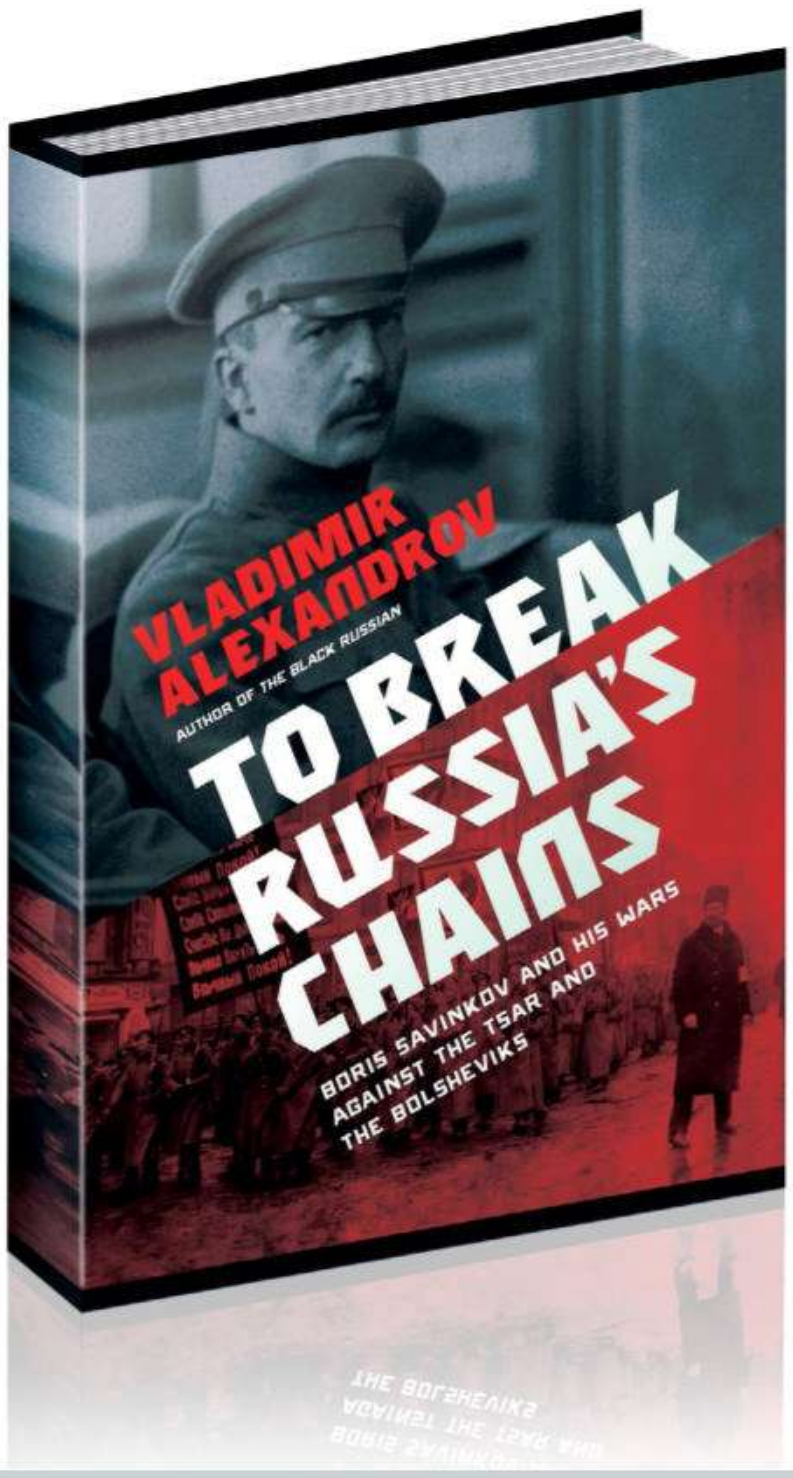
As Professor of Military History at the University of Wolverhampton, Buckley has used war-gaming methods to explore how and on what basis commanders and leaders make crucial decisions and the implications of their strategy. In this book, the author brings the notion of 'what if' history together with the essence of decision-making. Each of the scenarios is set in the Second World War, at a key moment in the fight against the Axis powers.

They focus on the defining moments of the conflict in which crucial tactical choices were made. The reader is placed in the position of evaluating evidence, balancing the possible outcomes and making a decision that might lead to success or crushing defeat. The scenarios start with Britain's Darkest Hour and run through the Mediterranean and Russian campaigns, the Battle of Midway, the bomber offensive, Casablanca, the race to the Rhine and the atom bomb. Each tactical and strategic decision leads to a different outcome. It is a unique, enjoyable approach to evaluating military decision-making. **JS**

TO BREAK RUSSIA'S CHAINS

A HIGHLY IMPRESSIVE GUIDE TO THE SWIRLING COMPLEXITIES OF THE RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR

Author: Vladimir Alexandrov
Publisher: Pegasus Books **Price:** £22


VLADIMIR ALEXANDROV
AUTHOR OF THE BLACK RUSSIAN
TO BREAK RUSSIA'S CHAINS
BORIS SAVINKOV AND HIS WARS AGAINST THE TSAR AND THE BOLSHEVIKS

This excellent study expertly chronicles the complexities of the Russian Revolution and the Civil War through the extraordinary life of Boris Savinkov. Dubbed neither a Red nor a White, he waged war first against the Tsar and then the Bolsheviks. Starting life as a revolutionary assassin, Savinkov rose to become Minister of War in Kerensky's beleaguered government. The breadth of Alexandrov's research is highly impressive as is his large cast of characters, whom he handles very deftly.

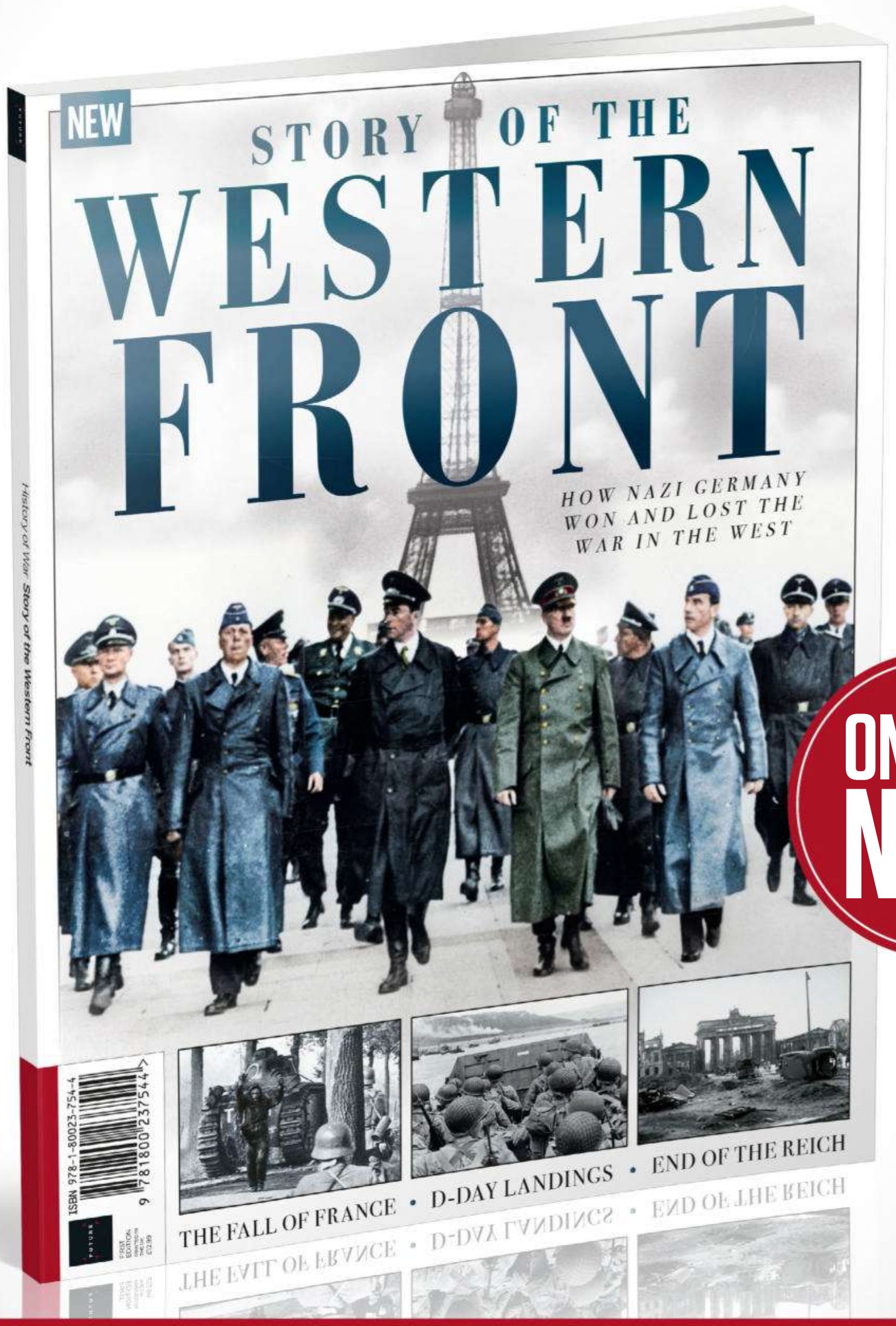
Woven into this remarkable tale is Winston Churchill, who backed international intervention supporting the Whites and Admiral Kolchak – who provided the only viable opposition to the Bolsheviks. Savinkov who campaigned for universal suffrage for all Russians, feared that Kolchak was simply playing lip service to this to please the Allies. Notably it was Savinkov who persuaded Churchill to support the Whites with men, money and weapons. Ultimately, though, these were unable to save the Whites from their own military ineptitude.

Savinkov's fate was suicide while in a Soviet prison. Tantalisingly, though, he offered a glimpse of what Russia could have become rather than what it became – the Soviet Union. As Alexandrov admits, he is drawn to figures "who have fallen through the cracks of history and deserve to be brought back to public memory". This very welcome biography now brings Savinkov's adventures to a whole new audience. **ATJ**

"STARTING LIFE AS A REVOLUTIONARY ASSASSIN, SAVINKOV ROSE TO BECOME MINISTER OF WAR IN KERENSKY'S BELEAGUERED GOVERNMENT"

IMMERSE YOURSELF IN THE STRUGGLE TO FREE THE WEST FROM NAZI RULE

By the end of 1940 Nazi Germany was the undisputed ruler of most of Europe, yet Britain refused to surrender, and with American support she soon started to fight back. This is the story of the battle to liberate occupied Europe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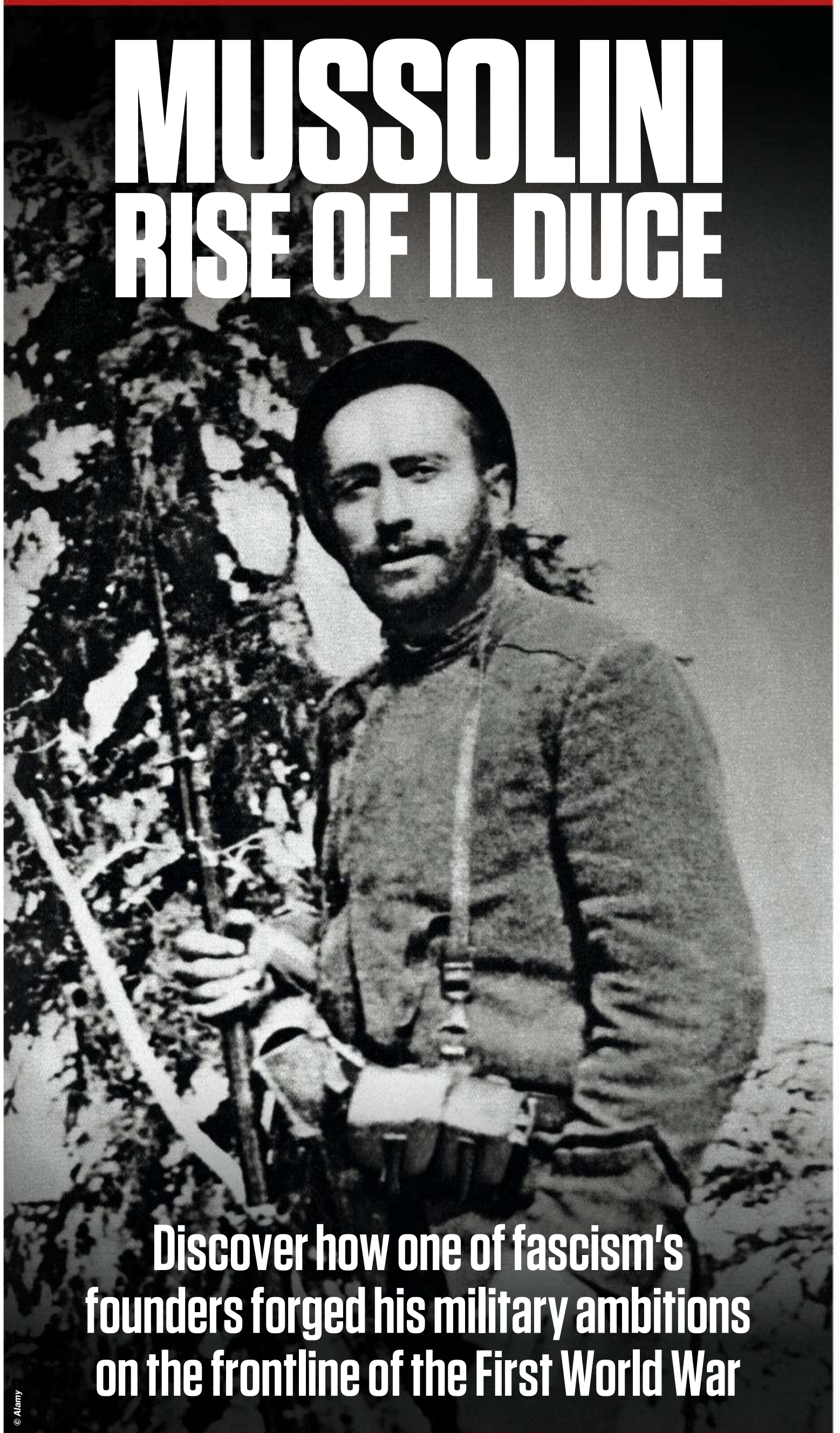
MUSSOLINI
RISE OF IL DUCE
Discover how one of fascism's founders forged his military ambitions on the frontline of the First World War
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HISTORY OF WAR

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VICTORY GOBLET

This impressive chalice was presented as a reward to a Dutch admiral for his famous victory against the English in 1667

The Raid on the Medway was one of the most celebrated military victories in Dutch history. Fought during the Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665-67), a Dutch fleet sailed up the River Medway in Kent and attacked the English Royal Navy off Chatham and Gillingham during 19-24 June 1667. To achieve this, Lieutenant-Admiral Michiel de Ruyter had first captured the town of Sheerness and the Dutch were able to wreak naval havoc. Coastal forts were attacked and 13 Royal Navy ships were burned or captured, including the flagship of the English fleet: HMS Royal Charles. The latter was towed back to the Netherlands in triumph, and the raid is regarded as one of the worst defeats in the Royal Navy's history.

The Dutch were jubilant after their victory and the Medway's commanders were hailed as heroes. They were given honorary gold chains and pensions by the government as well as commemorative golden goblets. Made in The Hague by Nicolaes Loockemans, the goblets had lids that bore the arms of the Dutch Republic. They were also engraved with depictions of the raid. The example pictured here was awarded to de Ruyter and features a continuous battle scene representing the major episodes of the raid, including the bombardment of forts, English ships on fire and the town of Rochester in the foreground. To demonstrate the unexpected dominance over the English in their own waters, Loockemans shows large numbers of Dutch ships in action with the Republic's flag being prominently displayed.

***Right:** The goblet measures 30cm in height and 15cm in diameter. Nicolaes Loockemans was usually a silversmith but worked in gold to emphasise the Dutch naval achievement*

***Below:** Michiel de Ruyter is known as one of the greatest naval commanders in history. He won several critical victories against the English and French*

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RIJKS MUSEUM

The goblet is held in the collections of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. For more information on the Netherlands' national museum visit:

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THE MORNING AFTER THE NIGHT BEFORE...

On December 7th 1941, Second Lieutenant Kenneth Taylor took to the skies still dressed in full black tie evening wear from the previous night – the Japanese surprise attack had interrupted his weekend leave, but even a mere hour of sleep wasn't going to stop him jumping aboard his Curtiss P-40B Warhawk. Alongside his wingman George Welch, and at times outnumbered six to one, Taylor earned the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions in defence of Pearl Harbor.

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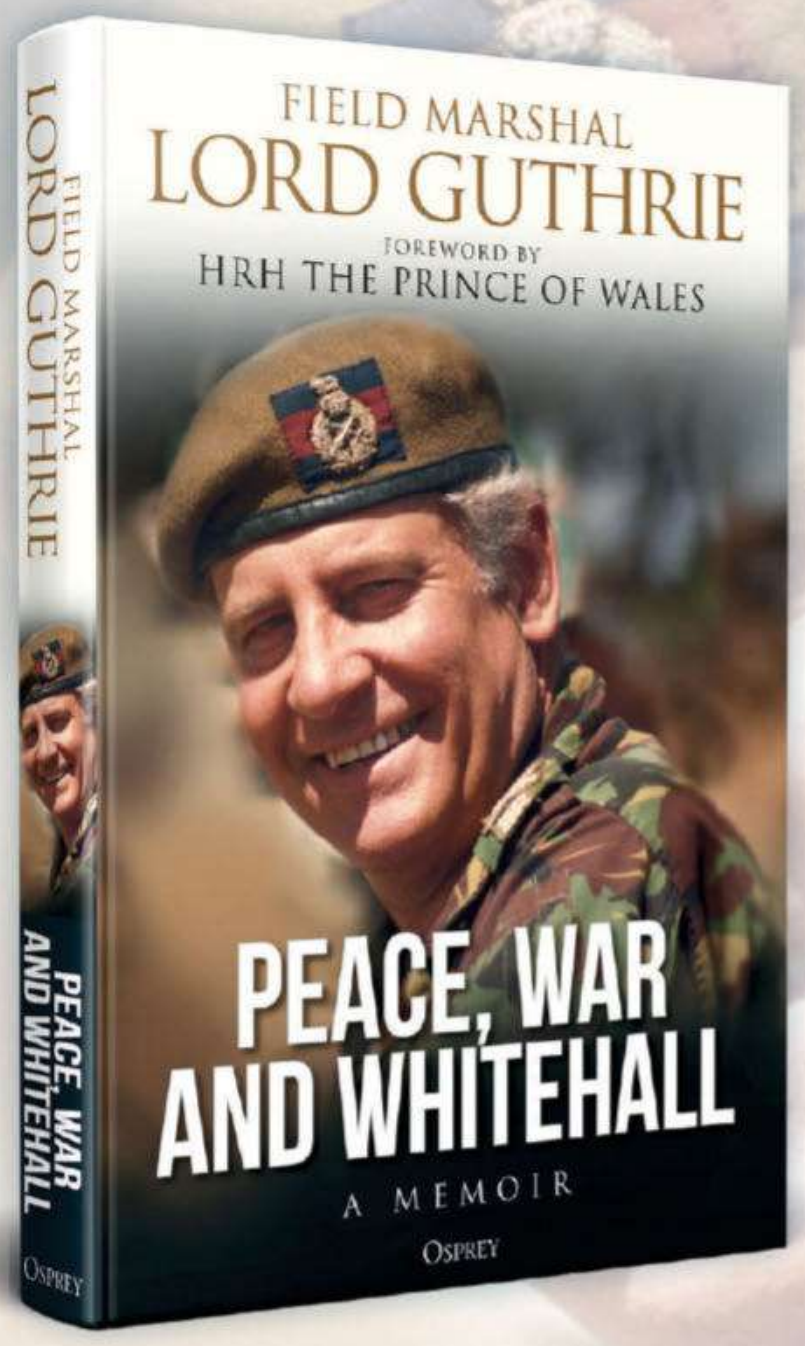
FIELD MARSHAL

LORD GUTHRIE

FOREWORD BY

HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES



PEACE, WAR AND WHITEHALL

A MEMOIR

Peace, War and Whitehall details the extraordinary career of Field Marshal the Lord Guthrie of Craigiebank.

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